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ABSTRACT

Community and educational organizations are provided with guidelines for complying with the National Endowment for the Arts 504 Regulations for incorporating the needs of the disabled into programming efforts. Information is presented in three chapters. Chapter 1 focuses on the 504 regulations. Following an introduction, subsections describe the background of the regulations, highlight major features of the regulations, outline steps for complying with the regulations, and provide answers to commonly asked questions. Chapter 2 contains separate sections on 504 provisions such as parking; entrances; water fountains; rest rooms; telephones; warning signals; special communication measures; as well as a section which looks at how these provisions apply to each of the arts areas. Chapter 3 consists of sections on audience development, staff training, and information about disabilities. A conclusion encourages organizations to comply with the 504 regulations. (LP)

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A 504 Handbook

The National Endowment for the Arts

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Music Section
National Library Service
for the Blind and
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Washington, D.C. 20542

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the ARTS and 504s

The National Endowment for the Arts

A 504 Handbook for Accessible Arts Programming

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Credits

This book was commissioned by the Office for Special Constituencies of the National Endowment for the Arts and produced by Barrier Free Environments, Inc.

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NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

WASHINGTON D.C. 20506

A Federal agency advised by the National Council on the Arts

Dear Reader,

You are engaged in important work: helping the arts to thrive and progress, and helping to make art available to audiences in your community.

Audiences of every dimension deserve the opportunity to enjoy art, and it is the mission of the National Endowment for the Arts to encourage broad accessibility:

> *The Endowment's programs are aimed at benefiting all people of the nation regardless of sex, race, creed, national origin, handicap, age, or habitat (adopted by the National Council on the Arts, November 5, 1983).*

We at the Endowment are committed to this mission, but it is individuals and organizations in the field who can really make full accessiblity a reality. As President Reagan noted in proclaiming National Arts With the Handicapped Week, 1984:

> *Art flows from and nourishes the human spirit. Through art, we learn to understand ourselves and our potential. For disabled people, the creative experience — whether as artists, audiences, educators, or students — is an essential part of leading a full and productive life. It is an important means for the disabled to be integrated into the mainstream of educational and cultural programs as well. Therefore, it is critical that our cultural institutions, educators, and communities strive to assure that disabled people can participate fully in the arts.*

This publication is designed to assist you in complying with the Endowment's 504 Regulations by incorporating the needs of disabled people into your overall programming efforts. Special constituencies should become less special: we anticipate the time when it is commonplace to design arts environments and programs for all people. Many arts organizations, to their credit, have led the way in providing opportunities for everyone to enjoy the arts through careful planning and work with disabled people. It is my hope you will advance this progress in your community.

We at the Endowment will continue to work with you. We need your help to these important ends.

Frank Hodsoll

Frank Hodsoll, Chairman
National Endowment for the Arts

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Chapter 1. The 504 Regulations

Statistics

No one knows exactly how many people are handicapped. Government figures vary widely, from 30 to 50 million. The following statistics are drawn from several sources, including the National Center for Health Statistics in Rockville, Maryland.

11.7 million physically disabled (including half a million people in wheelchairs; 3 million who use crutches, canes, or walkers; plus mobility impaired elderly, amputees, and people with illnesses such as chronic arthritis, severe cardiovascular disorders, and cerebral palsy).

12.5 million temporarily injured (broken limb, injury to back or spine, severe burns).

2.4 million deaf

11 million hearing impaired

1.8 million blind

8.2 million visually impaired

6.8 million mentally disabled (retarded, severely emotionally disturbed, brain damaged, severely learning disabled).

1.7 million homebound (chronic health disorders, wasting diseases like multiple sclerosis).

2.1 million institutionalized (mentally disturbed, mentally retarded, terminal illness).

Note: Some persons fall into more than one category. Allowing for this overlap, the U.S. Department of HEW estimated in 1979 that there are 35 million handicapped U.S. citizens.

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Introduction to Chapter 1

When an organization makes application to the Arts Endowment or a state arts agency for a grant, it signs an assurance of compliance with certain Federal nondiscrimination laws, including Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. In signing this assurance, the prospective grantee agrees to comply with the 504 Regulations during the grant time period. This publication presents an overview of the Regulations and ways for arts groups to meet their responsibilities.

Section 504: The Heart of the Rehabilitation Act

Because of the advances in medical science, the number of people surviving disabling accidents and diseases has grown, and the proportion of disabled people in American society is increasing. The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) estimated in 1979 that there were 35 million disabled citizens in the United States. It is believed that these numbers are increasing each year but a comprehensive study has not been conducted since 1979 to confirm this. Disabled people now seek equal opportunity in all federally supported programs and activities.

In 1973, Congress enacted legislation that would eventually benefit all disabled citizens. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 included a provision, called Section 504, comprising a single sentence: *No otherwise qualified handicapped individual in the United States... shall, solely by reason of his handicap, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.*

At that time, the implications of this sentence were not fully understood, but now it is regarded as the vital core of the disability rights movement.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 contains four sections which address different aspects of equal opportunity for disabled people. The sections and their requirements are:

Section 501: requires affirmative action in the hiring of disabled people by government agencies.

Section 502: establishes the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board and gives the Board authority to enforce the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 in all federally funded facilities.

Section 503: requires anyone receiving a contract or subcontract from the federal government in excess of $2500 to have an affirmative action plan for hiring qualified disabled people.

Section 504: prohibits discrimination against disabled people under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

This new law took a giant step forward in its mandate for equal opportunity for disabled people. The law was passed in behalf of all people with disabilities and thus included blind, deaf, mentally handicapped and, as later interpreted by the Attorney General, drug addicted and alcoholic people as well.

In order to provide for consistent government-wide enforcement, a Presidential Executive Order directed the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare to coordinate the development of 504 Regulations by all federal departments and agencies that provide financial assistance to any program or activity. In 1977, the Secretary signed final 504 Regulations for HEW which initiated a process whereby every federal agency with statutory authority to provide financial assistance was required to draft 504 Regulations for their grantees.

The National Endowment for the Arts was the third federal agency to issue proposed 504 compliance regulations on April 13, 1978. Final regulations became effective May 25, 1979.

In November, 1980, the Department of Justice (DOJ) replaced the Department of Health and Human Services (formerly HEW) as the lead and coordinating agency for all 504 Regulations.

The Arts Endowment's Office for Special Constituencies

As early as 1973, the Arts Endowment had expressed its concern for making the arts accessible to all people, and in June, 1976, created the position of Coordinator for Special Constituencies. Initially the Coordinator was to act as full-time advocate to make the Endowment's staff, panels, and grantees more aware of the needs of disabled people.

The Office for Special Constituencies conducts an advocacy program to insure arts accessibility for disabled people, older people, veterans, gifted and talented students, and people in hospitals, nursing homes, mental institutions, and prisons. The Office provides information and technical assistance to its grantees on making programs available to special constituencies and on complying with the Endowment's 504 Regulations.

Through the Arts Endowment's programs, the Office develops model project guidelines with the various Endowment programs for efforts that demonstrate the best ways to make the arts accessible to special constituencies.

Each state arts agency has a 504 coordinator. This staff member is responsible for educating and assisting the agency's staff and grantees on compliance with the 504 Regulations.

Technical assistance materials are available from the state arts agency, the Endowment's regional representatives, or directly from the Office for Special Constituencies. (See also, Where Can I Get Help, p.19)

Copies of 504 Regulations are available from:

The Office for Special Constituencies
National Endowment for the Arts
1100 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20506

General Counsel
National Endowment for the Humanities
Room 530
1100 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20506

Office for Civil Rights
Department of Health and Human Services
300 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20201

Office of General Counsel
National Science Foundation
1800 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20550

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Highlights of 504

...The arts are a right, not a privilege. ...No citizen should be deprived of the beauty and insights into the human experience that only the arts can impart.

National Council on the Arts
1973

The regulations for Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act are not specific. They mandate equal opportunity and nondiscrimination but they do not tell arts organizations how to accomplish these goals. Instead, the regulations have been written to allow as much flexibility in compliance as possible. In most cases, accommodations for disabled people will require more imagination than expense, more innovation than equipment — an implicit challenge to arts professionals.

The 504 Regulations do not require affirmative action employment or barrier-free access to every floor in every building. Instead, they require that arts organizations assure program accessibility to disabled people. There are several substantial, subtle concepts underlying this 504 mandate.

The major issue is accessibility with dignity. It is not enough to get into a building just any old way. I like to get into a building at the front with everybody else, where the rest of society gets in.

Itzhak Perlman
Violinist

Program Accessibility

The regulations mandate access to federally assisted programs and services. This means that an organization's program when viewed in its entirety must be equally accessible to disabled people. This does not mean that every part of a program must be available. For example, a performance or tour program on Thursday need not have interpreters for deaf visitors if interpreters are available on Tuesday.

However, providing separate or different programs is prohibited unless they are necessary to achieve equal opportunity. Where separate programs or activities must exist, disabled people still have the option to participate in any of the institution's other programs or activities even though specific services are not provided. Likewise, non-disabled people may attend special programs. For example, a museum may design a tour specifically for mentally retarded visitors, but that tour must be open to everyone, just as the other tours must be open to the mentally retarded person.

Architectural Barriers Removal, a resource guide is available from:

Office of Technical Services
A&TBCB
Room 1010
330 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Architectural Accessibility

Access to programs does not mean that every corner of every floor in a facility must be made architecturally accessible to people in wheelchairs. For example, a museum need not provide access to an arts education program on an inaccessible upper floor if the same program is offered on an accessible lower floor.

Public institutions often react to the 504 Regulations by running a survey of architectural barriers and estimating the cost of converting every square foot of every floor in every building. In most cases, modifications for total access are expensive and unnecessary. Instead, arts organizations should plan programmatically

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in conjunction with someone who knows how to solve access problems. When other methods for providing program access prove inadequate, structural modifications to the building may be necessary.

The regulations require that building modifications meet the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) *Specifications*, A117.1 (1961, Rev. 1971), or equivalent. Arts organizations should note that the ANSI *Specifications* were updated in 1980 and this updated version has been incorporated in the 1983 *Proposed Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards*. These new standards provide a greater degree of flexibility in design and improve accessibility.

Arts organizations which are recipients of federal assistance or which may become recipients should, when planning for construction or leasing of new facilities, require that all areas meet the new standards for access in order to avoid potentially expensive modifications later. Accessible new construction is generally not more expensive when properly included at the concept state of design.

The ANSI A117.1 (1980) is available ($5.00) from:

American National Standards Institute
1430 Broadway
New York, NY 10018

The *Proposed Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards* are available from:

Public Building Service
General Services Administration
18th and F Streets, NW
Washington, DC 20405

Service Responsibility

The regulations state that organizations are responsible for making necessary services available. Some disabled people will know where to find services or accommodations needed to make programs accessible and can provide good advice for disabled employees. State rehabilitation agencies, insurance companies, or consumer service organizations sometimes provide equipment and services. Often the service needs of disabled people can be minimized through a thoughtful change in policy or the purchase or donation of some assistive device.

Self-evaluation

An organization should have made its programs and activities accessible to disabled people prior to applying for Arts Endowment funds, and a self-evaluation is an invaluable tool for achieving this accessibility. It is strongly recommended that every organization conduct an evaluation of all policies, practices, and programs that are not currently equally available to disabled and non-disabled people. Disabled citizens and organizations representing them should participate in the evaluation process in an advisory capacity.

Policies, programs, and practices include a wide range of activities. Policies include employment procedures, admission restrictions, unequal fee structures, or simply general institution policy toward disabled individuals. Programs include activities that an arts organization makes available to the public. These also include public conveniences, tours, benefits, travel accommodations, receptions, special events, lectures, seminars, and educational programs. Practices may include discriminatory attitudes or treatment by docents, guards, and ushers, inaccessible public announcements, or the lack of reasonable accommodations for disabled

A *Program Evaluation Workbook* for cultural organizations is available from:

The Office for Special Constituencies
National Endowment for the Arts
1100 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20506

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visitors or staff. (For more information on preparing a self-evaluation, see Step 7, p. 10.)

Employment

The 504 Regulations do not require affirmative action employment, but they do mandate arts organizations to judge applicants solely on the basis of their qualifications. In other words, a museum cannot deny qualified blind people positions as educators simply because they are blind. Similarly, a peforming arts center cannot deny qualified deaf persons positions as stage technicians simply because they are deaf. Arts organizations may choose other candidates whose qualifications for a particular job are better. If, however, the disabled candidates are best qualified, then they cannot be denied employment. Unless it causes undue hardship on the operation of the program, the organization must provide whatever services and facilities a disabled employee may need on the job in order to perform effectively.

Nondiscriminatory employment procedures must also include accessible job applications and public notices of employment. For example, sign language interpretation for interviews (if requested in advance) should be available to deaf people, and notices of employment should be advertised on radio and in print. The job interviewer cannot ask disabled candidates to reveal their handicapping conditions. However, the interviewer can ask *all* candidates if they have a physical or mental condition which limits their ability to perform the job safely or fulfill the requirements of the job.

Enforcement

The Arts Endowment has incorporated into its 504 Regulations enforcement procedures used under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. An investigation will be conducted when a complaint is filed against a recipient of federal funds.

Arts organizations are responsible for self-evaluation and must develop their own plans for compliance *before* receiving funding. This planning is critical. Endowment applicants must attest that they will not discriminate against people with handicaps in any programs or activities receiving federal support. In addition, arts organizations should establish internal grievance procedures for disabled citizens in order to provide a mechanism for negotiating complaints locally.

The regulations encourage organizations to seek the help of local disabled citizens when planning a compliance system. The understanding and perspective of disabled people can aid the organization in achieving accessibility effectively. Further, involving the local disabled community can help minimize the likelihood of complaints.

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Costs

The costs for complying with Section 504 will depend on the arts organization's approach to the problem. Generally, the expenses will fall into two categories: captial costs for the removal of architectural barriers and program costs for providing special services.

Many arts professionals assume that the removal of architectural barriers will require large sums of scarce capital. However, not all architectural barriers have to be removed if an organization evaluates its programs and reschedules for maximum use of the most easily accessible spaces. The costs for making facilities accessible need not run high if changes are planned judiciously.

The costs of providing services will also vary according to individual circumstances. Reducing these costs is a good reason for convening an advisory committee of local disabled citizens who know best about local suppliers and where bargains exist. In many cases disabled people are eligible for special services and equipment that can be used in an arts program (e.g., hearing amplification devices, transportation).

Nevertheless, organizations will incur some costs for providing services. These can be reduced if local arts institutions share costs and services on a cooperative basis. In addition, the National Endowment for the Arts expects applicants to add service and program costs to their grant applications to make the proposed activity accessible.

Accessibility does not have to be expensive when considered in the context of regular program planning. Experience has repeatedly shown that accommodations designed to serve disabled persons generally improve the quality of programs for the broader public audience. In short, museums cannot afford not to make their programs accessible to all visitors.

Janice Majewski
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, DC

Ten Steps Toward Complying With 504

The 504 Regulations do not specify how arts organizations must conduct or coordinate a 504 compliance procedure. The process of compliance necessarily involves every aspect of the organization, and is the joint responsibility of board and staff. Careful planning and appropriate integration of the board of trustees, staff, and community in the process will facilitate compliance. Changes made in the program and the facility to accommodate the disabled population generally benefit everyone.

The following ten steps are presented as a guide for arts organizations which are not now federal fund recipients but which, in anticipation of receiving federal funding, are preparing to comply. This planning process allows flexibility in adapting to local conditions and the local organization's needs.

American Council for the Arts works in partnership with more than 500 state and community arts agencies and with a growing number of individual advocates for the arts.

ACA also produces publications including *Cultural Directory: Guide to Federal Funds and Services for Cultural Activities* available for $8.95 from:

Smithsonian Institution Press
P.O. Box 1579
Washington, DC 20013
(202) 357-1793

For information on the ACA write:

American Council for the Arts
570 Seventh Avenue
New York, NY 10018

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We need the best arts managers to develop model projects that show effective ways to open up arts activities to people with various kinds of disabilities — those that can really deliver and demonstrate to the rest of the field how things can happen if they are carefully planned in conjunction with disabled people. What special constituencies and minorities don't need is someone who is going to do a sloppy job.

Jerry Yoshitomi, Chairman
Presenting Organizations Panel
Inter-Arts Program
National Endowment for the Arts

Step 1: Designate a 504 coordinator from the staff and a liaison from the board.

One staff member should be responsible for coordinating the 504 program, even if it is a part-time assignment. In addition, one board member should be responsible for working with the staff and coordinating the 504 plans with the board. The organization will probably want to keep a central file of 504 materials and correspondence in case complaints arise.

The 504 coordinator should:

- collect and maintain 504 Regulations and supplementary materials, correspondence, and documentation of the compliance procedure;
- work with all departments affected by the regulations;
- clarify staff and board responsibilities under 504;
- administer the 504 program: develop and sign the self-evaluation document (see Step 7, p. 10), develop and implement grievance procedures, develop and maintain good working relations with disabled people and organizations representing people with disabilities.

The 504 Regulations will affect virtually all programs; therefore, arts organizations can include part of the expense of a 504 coordinator in their budget requests under most federal grant programs.

Step 2: Study materials on 504 and access to the arts.

Since the needs of disabled citizens vary, the 504 Regulations do not specifically tell arts organizations how to accomplish the goals of non-discrimination. Consequently, an arts organization may tailor its accommodations for disabled citizens to fit local needs and resources.

For every accommodation, there are many choices. For example, in considering how to make program notes available to blind and visually impaired people, a performing arts organization could choose among the following: braille (expensive), tape cassette (less expensive), readers (possibly free or inexpensive), talking books (free), radio transcription by local agencies serving the blind and physically disabled (free). Local blind citizens will know which choice best suits their needs. Nevertheless, the coordinator should be aware of the various possibilities and their relative costs.

The 504 coordinator and the board liaison should obtain and study the following materials:

- 504 Regulations and all supplementary materials from the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities (its regulations also apply to the recipients of funds from the Institute of Museum Services), the National Science Foundation, and the Smithsonian Institution:

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- state and local codes and regulations on architectural accessibility and equal opportunity for disabled citizens, available through municipal planning departments;
- publications about access to the arts, available free from the Office for Special Constituencies at the National Endowment for the Arts, (see list, p. 20);
- *The Directory of National Information Sources on Handicapping Conditions and Related Services* is available ($8.00) from Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402, Order No. 065-000-00142-0.
- *Federal Assistance for Programs Serving the Handicapped* (free), Clearinghouse on the Handicapped, Office of Information and Resources for the Handicapped, Room 3132, Switzer Building, Washington, DC 20202-2319.

Orientation of board and staff to 504 Regulations and discussion of their representative responsibilities should occur at this time.

Step 3: Conduct a facility and program needs assessment. Develop a preliminary compliance plan and an organizational impact statement.

An early assessment of needs allows the organization to develop a well-integrated compliance plan which addresses specific needs. The organizational impact statement provides a process through which the preliminary compliance plan can be promptly integrated into the general functions and operations of the organization.

The needs assessment should consist of an evaluation of all programs and their respective physical accessibility. For the compliance plan, not every program nor every floor needs to be accessible, but enough accessible programs and facilities must be provided so that disabled people have an equal opportunity to benefit from the organization's program offerings, "when viewed in their entirety."

The organizational impact statement should discuss the impact that the preliminary compliance plan will have on administrative functions in the areas of general planning (including changes in the physical plant), program planning, budgeting, fund-raising, staffing, marketing, public relations, and board development.

Step 4: Survey local disabled constituency.

Preliminary contact should be made with the local organizations representing disabled people. These should include service agencies, membership organizations of disabled people and parents of disabled children, independent living centers, schools, institutions, and rehabilitation units. These discussions serve three purposes: they alert disabled people to the organization's efforts to make programs accessible; they put the organization at the top of the list for supplementary services that local agencies can provide; and they familiarize the 504 coordinator with the local politics and conditions of disabled citizens.

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I'm interested in people's awareness of each other - all of their needs. All of the arts are to remind us of the values of life itself and our relationship to each other in it. When you listen to a symphony — and watch it — you see the total, dedicated discipline in every one of those muscians, so that the whole symphony plays as one voice. That kind of cooperation is what is so magical. Anybody can be a soloist.

Celeste Holm
Member
National Council on the Arts

Step 5: Prepare an informative presentation.

Based on discussions with local organizations, the staff should prepare a presentation for disabled citizens. In many cases, disabled people, particularly adults, are not aware of the organization's purposes and programs and are unaccustomed to visiting cultural activities in general. The presentation should include a brief history of the organization and the importance of its programs to the community, a review of the preliminary needs assessment survey, and an announcement of the 504 compliance program. The presentation can be used in a variety of ways: in press announcements, in subsequent meetings with representatives of the disabled community, and in presentations to local organizations.

Step 6: Select and convene an advisory council.

At this stage, the 504 coordinator should have assessed the attitudes and interrelations of the organizations representing or serving disabled people. Members of an advisory council should include a representative from each category of disability. The coordinator may also consider seeking out some representatives from the most active organizations of disabled people — those most likely to file a 504 complaint against the organization.

To ensure integration of the advisory council's activities into day-to-day organizational concerns, members of the advisory council should include: staff at the decision-making level, the board liaison, and the 504 coordinator. The 504 coordinator should work closely with the board liaison to ensure that a review of the 504 compliance plan is on the agenda of board meetings. (See Step 7, below.) It is suggested that the board elect a disabled person to its membership.

Depending on the organization's structure and relations with the community, the 504 advisory council may become a subcommittee within an existing advisory council or may serve as a freestanding advisory body for a specified period of time. Nevertheless, the coordinator should maintain a review and advisory mechanism on accessibility. Disabled people are very concerned about having a part in the development of programs designed to serve them.

Step 7: Study program and facility accessibility; conduct a self-evaluation.

In subsequent meetings, the coordinator and advisory council may use the Endowment's *Program Evaluation Workbook* (page 5) to study the organization's programs in relation to the needs assessment. In many cases, this process will identify alternatives which make architectural or structural changes unnecessary. Examples of such alternatives are rescheduling classes, moving all or parts of exhibitions to accessible spaces, or scheduling events that circulate to at least one accessible space, possibly in another location. In order to complete

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the self-evaluation document, the advisory council will probably need to visit the organization's programs, compile and analyze data pertaining to local resources, and study alternative methods and associated costs for achieving accessibility.

The self-evaluation document should:

- describe each of the organization's current programs in terms of its accessibility to each kind of disability;
- present program modifications which improve accessibility;
- identify physical barriers that limit accessibility;
- present suggestions which overcome those limitations;
- describe employment practices (including methods of advertising and recruiting);
- analyze each building (including rented spaces) where program *and* administrative activities take place;
- list accessibility requirements for public amenities (parking, telephones, water fountains, toilets, building guides, signs, restaurants, gift shops, etc.), and
- establish grievance procedures for complaints.

The self-evaluation document should contain the name, title, address, and telephone number of the person responsible for the document, e.g., the 504 coordinator. As the permanent record of the process of compliance, it should be kept with the organization's 504 materials. It will be useful in the event that documentation is ever required by a granting agency or court of law.

Step 8: Prepare a transition plan.

If all programs and public amenities are located in accessible spaces with proper services, then 504 compliance is theoretically accomplished with the self-evaluation statement. In certain cases, art facilities will require some form of structural modification, or programs will require relocation. These physical changes can be detailed in a transition plan drawn up by the coordinator and the advisory council.

A transition plan may include:

- identification of all physical barriers that limit program accessibility (e.g., small type on programs, no spaces for wheelchairs);
- methods (including fund-raising) that will be used to make facilities accessible; and
- a schedule for completion of steps necessary to achieve full program accessibility.

Because this document contains plans for compliance which may involve both the program and the facility, it should be discussed in detail with the board's planning, finance, and if necessary, fund-raising committees. After these discussions, the revised and refined version should be made available to the entire board. The board may take action on items involving major changes in program or facility.

Accessibility Modifications (1976) is available for $2.50 from:

Special Office for the Handicapped
N.C. Department of Insurance
Engineering Division
P.O. Box 26387
Raleigh, NC 27611

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Step 9: Solicit services and funding to implement transition.

The 504 coordinator in conjunction with advisory council members should implement the transition plan. In many cases, structural accommodations or their equivalent can be accomplished without resorting to capital fund-raising. For example, curb cuts can be requested from city government; city planning departments often have capital funds for public accommodations (outdoor ramps connecting the sidewalks to the main entrance, for example); equipment purchased through amortized leasing agreements is an eligible budget item in some grant programs.

Nevertheless some capital fund-raising may be necessary. Working with the administration and development office, the advisory council and the board may be able to identify new funding sources for capital improvements. Also, an arts organization supported by its local disabled community has a compelling argument for seeking funds from traditional sources. The organization can solicit additional support for its fund-raising efforts from local schools, hospitals, institutions, and rehabilitation and community centers that stand to gain a cultural program if the organization's facilities are made accessible.

Step 10: Periodically review transition program.

The 504 coordinator, the advisory council, and the board should periodically review and assess the organization's progress toward its final program accessibility goal. Frequent reviews will not only assist the organization in completing its goals, but also will provide a mechanism for incorporating fresh thinking and improvements as the process develops.

The coordinator should maintain files documenting the organization's efforts, including all correspondence, notes, minutes of advisory council meetings, the self-evaluation document, and the transition plan. In addition, the 504 coordinator should handle requests for tours or special services, complaints about programs, or requests for documents pertaining to accessibility. Advisory council members should be urged to report the organization's progress to their friends and to organizations representing disabled people. The coordinator and the advisory council should conduct awareness and training programs for front line staff — especially docents, ushers, guards, tour guides, receptionists, switchboard operators, educators, and box office staff. The orientation of new board members should include orientation to accessibility issues and the compliance plan.

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Questions and Answers About 504 Compliance

The following are the most frequent inquiries about 504 and methods for compliance.

What organizations and programs are affected by the 504 Regulations?

Any program that receives direct or indirect federal financial support must comply with the 504 Regulations. For example, arts programs supported by federal funds dispensed by a state arts agency must comply with 504. In addition, arts programs supported by municipal funds garnered from federal revenue-sharing must abide by the 504 Regulations.

The concept is that *any* program or activity receiving *any* federal funding must comply with the regulations. In other words, an arts program must comply with all the 504 mandates and provide equal opportunity to all disabled citizens even if federal funds cover less than half the expenses. An organization receiving no federal support is not covered by the regulations. An organization receiving no other federal support except for a specific activity must make only that activity accessible. However, all the organization's programs and activities are affected if federal funds cover any portion of overhead or general operating expenses.

It is important to keep in mind that accessibility for disabled citizens is a civil rights movement. Any organization seeking ways to avoid equal rights for disabled citizens is denying people opportunities to participate in the arts. Virtually every major public service is affected by the 504 mandate, and law suits involving equal opportunity in all public services are litigated daily. Arts groups are best advised to seize upon the 504 mandate as an opportunity to involve an enormous new audience.

How is "handicapped person" defined?

Under 504 Regulations, "handicapped person" is defined in three ways. First, it means any person who "has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities (functions such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working)."

In other words, only physical and mental handicaps are included. Consequently, environmental, cultural, and economic disadvantages are not covered nor are prison records or age. Of course, if a person has any of these characteristics and also has a physical or mental handicap, he or she is included within the definition of "handicapped person."

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Second, it includes any person who "has a record of such an impairment (has a history of, or has been misclassified as having, a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities)."

This means people who have a history of a handicapping condition (e.g., mental or emotional illness, heart disease, cancer) but no longer have the condition, plus people who have been incorrectly classified as having such a condition (e.g., mentally retarded), are protected from discrimination under Section 504.

Finally, it includes any person who "is regarded as having an impairment." Primarily, this means treating people as though they were disabled. For example, a person may have a broken toe or minor limp that does not affect major life activities but is discriminated against because of the condition. Similarly, discrimination against people with disfiguring scars, or mental or emotional conditions is prohibited.

If there are no disabled people in our community are we still required to make programs and facilities accessible?

Section 504 requires that federally assisted programs and activities be available to qualified handicapped persons. Therefore, recipients of federal assistance must be ready to accommodate disabled persons even if there is no perceived present need for such accommodation. In the process of ensuring nondiscrimination, 504 requires certain actions that must be taken regardless of the presence of disabled persons who might benefit.

This principle, however, does not mean that arts organizations must provide specific program accommodations when there are no disabled people present — brailled materials or sign language interpretation, for example. Rather, the principle means that the organization must place itself in the position of being able to provide accommodations in case disabled people make requests for services in the future. Therefore, every arts organization receiving federal financial support should make advance preparations for program accessibility, as outlined in the Ten Steps Toward Complying With 504, p. 7.

How is a 504 complaint filed?

There are many equally effective ways to file a 504 complaint against any organization that receives federal financial support. And any citizen may file a 504 complaint. However, it is best to file complaints with the Civil Rights Office of the federal agency providing financial support to the local organization. Many arts organizations receive funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the U.S. Department of Education, or the National Science Foundation. The Endowment

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expects that recipients will make every effort to resolve any allegations of noncompliance on an informal and amicable basis.

When filing, include as much information as possible about the organization you are complaining about—especially the organization's chief administrator, address, and telephone number. Specify how the organization is inaccessible or how the program is unusable, and suggest ways in which you think the problem could be remedied. Also be sure to include your own address and telephone number. If specifically requested, the National Endowment for the Arts will keep information regarding the identity of a complainant confidential, to the extent allowed by law.

What happens if a 504 complaint is filed against any program?

A 504 complaint will not result in the immediate loss of federal support. The Arts Endowment's Civil Rights Division will contact both parties when a 504 complaint occurs, ascertain the nature of the problem, and negotiate a reasonable compromise according to the law. For example, one 504 complaint was filed against a museum when a guard refused to allow a physically disabled visitor to go up a spiral ramp. The complaint was satisfied when the administration issued a memorandum to museum guards regarding treatment and accessibility for physically disabled people.

If an arts organization unreasonably refuses to accommodate a disabled complainant, a responsible Arts Endowment official is required to make a prompt investigation when a possible failure to comply with regulations is indicated. Negotiations and remedial actions will follow the same procedures used in Title VI complaint situations.

In all 504 complaint cases, the Civil Rights Office will look for good faith compliance with 504 Regulations and gestures of reasonable accommodation toward other disabled constituents. These would include the self-evaluation and related documents, documentation of the involvement of disabled people (such as minutes from an advisory council), correspondence files, and notices or communications to disabled audiences.

What is a grievance procedure?

A grievance procedure is an established formal or informal system within an arts organization that identifies responsible staff persons, defines responsibilities, sets forth a clearly identified procedure, establishes criteria for judgment, describes hearing procedures, and sets time limits for negotiating differences between the organization and its staff or its users. It is a particularly useful technique for settling local or in-house differences without outside intervention.

The National Endowment for the Arts has adopted a formal

Complaints

Complaints can be submitted to one of the following offices:

National Endowment for the Arts
Division of Civil Rights
1100 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20506

Department of Education
Policy Enforcement Service
330 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20201

National Endowment for the Humanities
General Counsel's Office
Room 530
1100 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20506

Office of General Counsel
National Science Foundation
Washington, DC 20550

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grievance procedure for its employees that may be used as a model for interested arts organizations. Copies are available from the Arts Endowment's General Counsel's Office or Division of Civil Rights.

What is the difference between barrier free buildings and those modified for 504 compliance?

A barrier free building is a structure containing no architectural barriers — one in which all areas are accessible to disabled individuals. This includes, for example, at least one of all public conveniences on every floor usable by physically disabled people, raised letter signs for blind visitors, and audio-visual fire alarms and elevator signals for deaf and blind people.

A building with 504 structural modifications is the result of a planning process that determined the minimum amount of construction necessary to make programs accessible. Consequently, the building need be accessible to disabled users only to the extent required to provide equal access to federally funded programs and activities.

Remember, however, that any building which receives federal money for construction after September, 1969, and for leasing after 1977 must meet new standards for accessibility. Section 502 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and later amendments place responsibility for those standards and their enforcement with the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (A&TBCB). To file a complaint about a federally funded building that is not accessible or for additional information write or call:

A & TBCB
Room 1010, 330 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20202.
(202) 245-1801 (Voice/TDD)

The A&TBCB also develops and distributes public awareness materials.

What is an Assurance Form and how does it affect my organization?

An Assurance of Compliance Form is sent to arts organizations with the notification of grant award letters from the National Endowment for the Arts or from their state arts agency. Before they receive any of the award, grantees must sign and return the form which states that the recipient organization is in compliance with Section 504.

Specifically for state arts agencies or for organizations that sub-contract a significant portion of their grant to another organization, the 504 Regulations requires similar written assurances from their sub-grantees. To assure nondiscrimination in other organizations that provide programs or activities to beneficiaries, for example, labor unions or health maintenance organizations, a recipient should also request an assurance form.

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I realize that 504 means we have to do more for disabled people. May we set up a special program for them outside the current activities and satisfy the 504 mandate?

Section 504 does not require, and in fact discourages, the creation of separate programs and activities for disabled people. The self-evaluation process analyzes all existing programs and activities of the recipient. Modifications in these programs and activities should be made to ensure, to the maximum possible extent, opportunities for full participation and integration of disabled people. The regulations prohibit separate programs for disabled people unless they are necessary to afford equal opportunity. (See Program Accessibility, p. 4.) Modifying existing programs is preferrable to designing new programs which may create new barriers to a person's ability to function in the "most integrated setting appropriate."

While it may be tempting to create new programs and take initiatives to "do something for the disabled," the basic objective of Section 504 is to ensure full participation, a matter that may frequently require little more than an open mind. Where "doing more for disabled people" means separate, special, or restricted services and programs, it results in "doing less" by removing equal opportunity and freedom of choice. Overreacting to the Section 504 requirements will not work to the benefit of the recipient or its disabled beneficiaries and employees.

Will insurance premiums go up, and don't we risk greater liability if we hire disabled employees or encourage disabled visitors?

Disabled people are no greater risks to themselves or to others than anyone else. Generally, disabled people may be a little more cautious than the general public. Most insurance companies do not assume a greater liability for their clients simply because disabled people are on the premises. And, because Workemen's Compensation and Blue Cross and Blue Shield are group policies, the addition of an individual will not affect the policy as a whole.

The 504 Regulations do not permit recipients to refuse disabled visitors the right to be carried to a program if they make their own arrangements. It would be wise, however, for a recipient organization to keep release forms ready for disabled people and their carriers to sign. In addition, a recipient should check with its insurance company to be sure that the policy covers liability if an accident occurs.

Are consortia or cooperative agreements allowed or recommended under 504?

Nothing in the regulations prohibits arts organizations from

Years ago, many discussions with arts groups about accessibility for people with disabilities often led to comments like, "We do a special program for these people each year," or "We can't sacrifice quality."

I'm happy to report that our grantees have moved past these attitudinal barriers, through technical assistance and sensitivity workshops provided by the Michigan Council for the Arts. Arts organizations have progressed from "special programs" to making existing programs available to special constituencies. People with disabilities are serving on the governing boards and panels, and working as staff, artists or volunteers.

However, there is still some reticence on the part of a few organizations to explore new approaches. Often this restraint reflects their attitude not only towards disabled people, but toward other minority populations as well. We must continue to work to bring these groups beyond that point — and make the arts open to everyone!

Donniel Doster
504 Coordinator
Michigan Council for the Arts

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forming cooperative agreements for the public benefit. Thus, if three performing arts centers decide to join together to offer an arts festival to all audiences, the arrangement would not violate 504. However, the arrangement would violate 504 if three centers set up a consortium in which one offered modern dance and another classical ballet, neither of which was accessible, and the third offered drama to disabled visitors. Similarly, performing arts centers cannot agree to an arrangement in which one serves blind people, another deaf people, and a third serves physically disabled people. Restricting disabled people to limited choices is the principal violation in such agreements.

Consortia may be most valuable when arts organizations band together to share costs, services, and expertise. Interpreter services for the deaf, brailling and audio transcription for the blind, or transportation and adaptive equipment for the physically disabled are examples of shared services. In addition, consultants can be hired to serve many organizations at once, and several institutions can purchase special items in quantity more cheaply than in small lots.

Under the employment provisions of 504, what are reasonable accommodations for employees?

Reasonable accommodations will in many cases simply mean having an open mind toward employees who use techniques not common to the general population but which are perfectly effective on the job. Employers are cautioned against assuming that different techniques mean inferior performance.

The employer's responsibility to accommodate disabled employees may include modifying facilities, restructuring job requirements or activities, modifying work schedules, purchasing or modifying equipment, reassigning offices or spaces, or providing readers or interpreters. There is, however, no requirement to alter essential functions, change the basic nature of a job description, or create a position that does not already exist. If reasonable accommodations conspire to create an undue hardship for an employer, the failure to hire or promote a disabled person will not be considered discriminatory.

What constitutes an "undue hardship" for an employer when providing reasonable accommodation?

The 504 Regulations list the following factors: the overall size of the recipient's program in terms of the number of employees, type of facilities, and size of budget; the type of operation, including the composition and structure of the work force; and the nature and cost of the necessary accommodation.

It is expected that the "reasonable accommodation" and "undue hardship" concepts may cause difficulties for employers. However, the lack of definition in the terms leave employers as much room to

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maneuver as it leaves enforcement officials room for interpretation. In all cases, common sense and discretion should prevail. Cases in which complaints of employment discrimination are countered by pleading undue hardship will be determined mostly according to "fair play" concepts. Employers should always seek advice of disabled employees and legal counsel when issues of reasonable accommodation and undue hardship arise.

Does nondiscrimination against drug addicts and alcoholics mean that we must allow drinking and drug use on the job?

Absolutely not. Alcoholics and drug addicts must abide by all rules and regulations applied to all employees. The principal operating factor is not to single out alcoholics or drug users for discrimination or special rules that are not applied to everyone.

What are my obligations to communicate with disabled citizens?

The 504 Regulations require that recipients make certain that information about programs, activities, services, and employment opportunities is regularly and adequately communicated to disabled people. Also, those who recruit employees for the recipient must be aware of the modifications that have already been made (or would be made) in programs for any disabled persons interested in taking advantage of such opportunities. Obviously, such communications must be made in forms that are appropriate for different disabilities.

Recipients must create the opportunity for full participation for disabled people, but full participation will not be achieved unless this opportunity is well communicated. Blind individuals may or may not wish to take advantage of readers, but they must know that such a service exists (or would exist); deaf persons may or may not wish to take advantage of interpreters made available by the recipient but they must know that such a service exists (or would exist); people with mobility impairments may or may not wish to take advantage of special parking arrangements, but they must know the arrangements exist.

For more information on communication objectives and techniques, see *Being There* in Chapter 2, and Audience Development in Chapter 3.

Where can I get help?

Local disabled people are the best source of help when deciding what kind of accommodations are best suited for your community. The Office for Special Constituencies at the National Endowment for the Arts has a series of technical assistance publications and audio-visual materials on making the arts accessible to disabled

A variety of access materials are available from:

The National Committee, Arts with the Handicapped
Education Office
Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
Washington, DC 20009
(202) 332-6960
(202) 293-3989 (Voice/TDD)

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The following materials are available from:

Office for Special Constituencies
National Endowment for the Arts
1100 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20506

- list of additional technical assistance publications and materials,
- names and addresses of 504 coordinators in state arts agencies,
- names and addresses of Endowment regional representatives,
- list of model projects for special constituencies,
- materials on access for older Americans.

A guide for accessibility for historic buildings, *Access to Historic Buildings for the Disabled*, is available from:

National Park Service
1100 L Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240
(202) 343-9576

Adapting Historic Campus Structures for Accessibility is available for $5.50 from:

Association of Physical Plant Administrators
Publication Secretary
1446 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-3492
(703) 684-1446

people. Project staff will also answer the individual inquiries from arts organizations with unusual problems.

For on-site assistance, the Arts Endowment's regional representatives can help arts organizations within their region.

In addition, the director or a 504 coordinator in each state's arts agency can supply materials to arts organizations within a state or territory and provide assistance.

How does 504 affect historic properties?

If access is judiciously planned, compliance with the 504 Regulations need not affect historic preservation adversely. 504 mandates program accessibility—not unnecessary architectural modifications. Adding anachronistic ramps to a colonial facade is not the only answer to program accessibility. Historic properties should explore all alternative means of program accessibility before altering a building's historic character or architectural integrity. Suggested alternatives include reassigning programs to accessible spaces within or outside the historic property, or assigning aides to help handicapped visitors through an inaccessible facility.

Working with local disabled people, a number of historic museums have experimented with alternative methods during the past several years. For example, re-enactments of historic events that are presented in inaccessible spaces may be videotaped and shown in an accessible location. Videotaping has proved valuable for all audiences and acceptable to local disabled citizens. Other methods include models, dramas, slide presentations to show the portions of buildings that are inaccessible, and a variety of architectural techniques that make the lower floors of buildings accessible without altering their historic character.

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Chapter 2. Access to Arts Programs

Introduction to Chapter 2

As a recipient of federal funds, you are required to make your arts programs available to disabled people. This availability applies to everyone connected with the program — staff, performers, and volunteers, as well as audience, participants, or visitors. This chapter is the "how-to" part of the book, and will give you guidelines which can be applied to all arts programs as well as specific suggestions for five arts disciplines. The chapter is divided into three parts, *Getting There*, *Being There*, and *Taking Part*.

Getting There discusses architectural accessibility and emphasizes provisions for people with mobility disabilities. The next part, *Being There*, is about communication techniques and focuses on the needs of people with visual, hearing, or learning impairments. *Getting There* **and** *Being There* **apply to all facilities and programs receiving federal assistance and should be read by everyone.**

The third part, *Taking Part*, is organized according to arts disciplines — visual, peforming, literary, media, and design arts. **In** *Taking Part*, **you should read the introduction and the section that best applies to your arts program.** These five, discipline-based sections present ways to look at facilities, activities, events, or performances in order to see their architectural or communication components. When accessibility problems are broken down into their component parts, solutions can often be found in *Getting There* or *Being There*. Suggestions for solving other problems specific to each arts area are presented as special topics throughout the chapter. Where to Find It, (p. 58), lists all the special topics presented in Chapter 2.

A sixth section on planning meetings follows the five sections on the arts areas. It lists all the information in the book which pertains to meetings and panels.

Although each arts program belongs to one of the five arts areas, there is much overlap between them. For example, anyone running an arts festival should read the performing, visual, and design arts sections if the program includes plays, concerts, and a tour of historic downtown. A theater group using its lobby as an art gallery would need to know about access to the visual arts as well as to the performing arts.

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Getting There

Making arts programs accessible may not require making *all* of a building accessible — but somewhere along the way you are sure to have to answer the question, "Can disabled people use this arts facility well enough so that they have the same access to all of our programs as our non-disabled participants, employees, and volunteers?"

If your program is located in a new or newly remodeled building, it *should*, at the very least, comply with the ANSI *Specifications* A117.1 (R1971). (See Architectural Accessibility, p. 4). In addition, it must comply with state and or local accessibility standards. Even if the building complies with the standards, it is a good idea to survey the building for possible areas that may not work well for disabled people. Many arts programs are housed in older buildings, or buildings that were originally designed for some other use, and these buildings may be inaccessible.

In examining your facility for architectural accessibility, you must consider *every* person who is in any way connected with your program. Can your audience, visitors, performers, staff, and volunteers, *all* get to where they need to be? For example, can your program accommodate a deaf lighting designer or an actress with leg braces and crutches, or a visually impaired box-office manager, or a lecturer in a wheelchair, or a drama critic with a broken leg?

The following material offers the arts administrator or 504 coordinator ideas about solving the architectural accessibility problems which they discover. This section is not comprehensive and it is not a building standard. It presents some solutions and approaches to common problems while describing generally accepted standards by which you can judge your building's accessibility. For complete coverage of requirements, use either ANSI A117.1 or the *Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards*.

Even if your permanent programs are in an accessible building, you may find that you occasionally use facilities that are not accessible. For temporary functions like arts festivals, circulating exhibitions, or special performances, you may need temporary solutions to ramp a set of stairs, by-pass a curb, provide usable restrooms, or improve signage. Some of these temporary solutions are suitable for ultra low-budget programs that simply cannot afford to do anything better.

If you are planning to build or remodel, this section will guide you to areas that need particular attention. However, the work should be done by an architect who is fully aware of all applicable accessability standards and is truly sensitive to the environmental needs of disabled people.

1. Accessible Route

An accessible route is a continuous, level, smooth, hard surface pathway at least 36" wide which has no curbs, steps, stairs, or abrupt changes in level greater than 12". No object should protrude into the clear space of the route at any height. (See Protruding Objects, p. 33.) An accessible route provides a safe and usable path for people who use wheelchairs, crutches, braces, canes, or walkers, or who walk with difficulty, or who have respiratory or heart problems, or other conditions that limit stamina or mobility. It is also safer and easier for visually impaired people to follow.

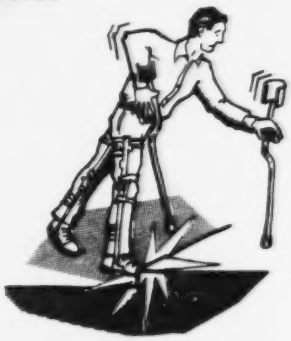
Accessible routes are part of site circulation as well as circulation inside the building. The same criteria apply to both interior and exterior locations.

In surveying walks, paths, corridors, and floor surfaces for suitability as accessible routes, look for small changes in level, steps, and protruding objects.

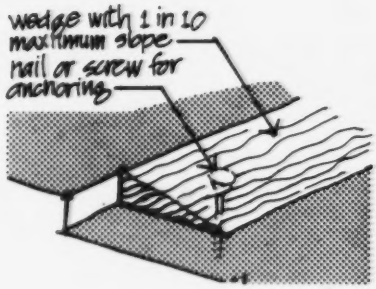
Any vertical change in level or bump greater than 1/2" can prevent some disabled people from using the accessible route. Small changes in level can be ramped with a wedge-shaped piece of wood.

Curbs must be ramped. If there are steps in the only available route, you can install a ramp or a mechanical lift. An exterior accessible route should be free from sand, gravel, wide gratings, debris, or anything that could trip people or make an unstable or uneven surface.

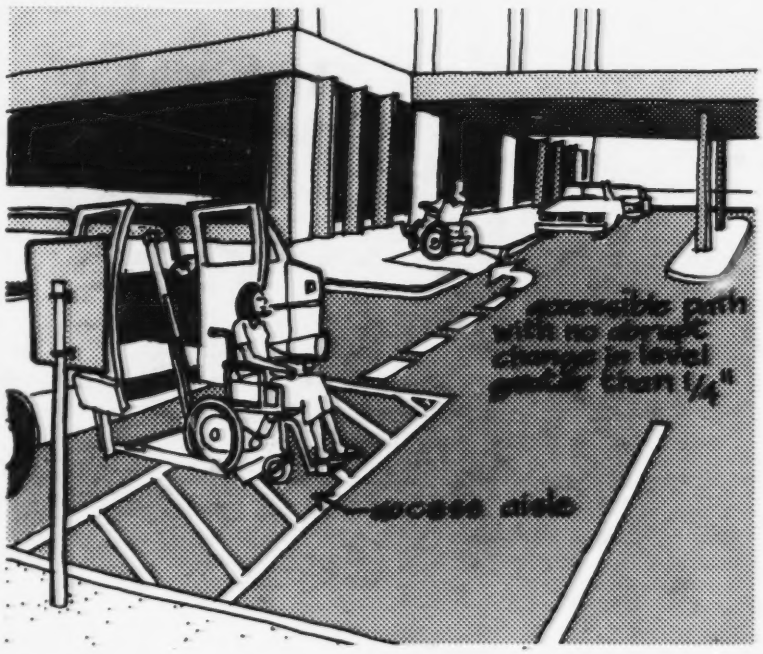
A Hazard at Small Changes in Level



Correcting Small Changes in Level



Exterior Accessible Route



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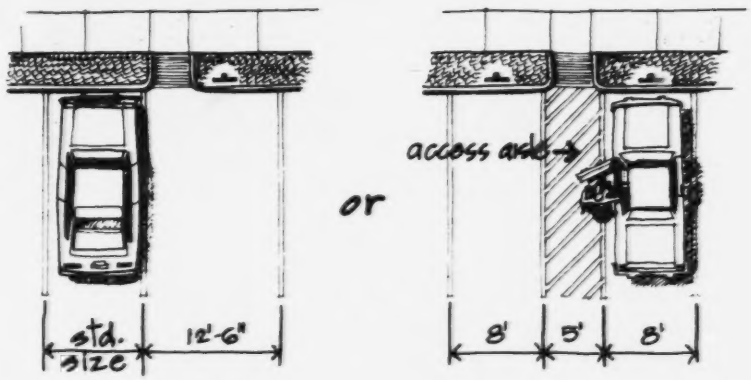
2. Parking

Parking Spaces

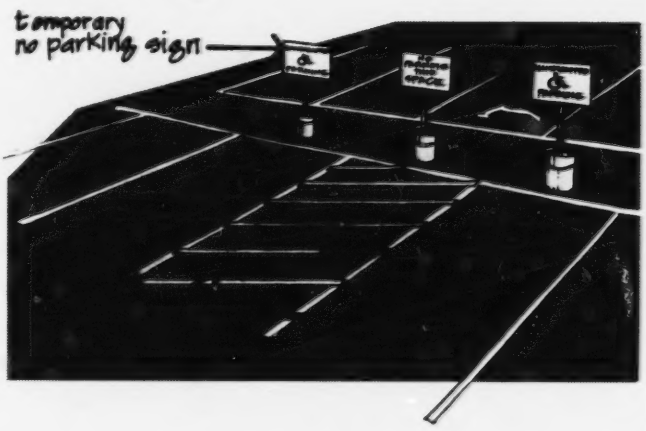
Mobility impaired drivers need parking spaces which are 12'-6" wide, or 8 feet wide with a 5 foot access aisle between them. These spaces should be marked by an above ground sign as reserved for handicapped people. A sign painted on the pavement is not sufficient.

Temporary handicapped parking spaces can be designated in streets or where parallel parking exists as long as there is a driveway or curb ramp which will allow a disabled driver to exit on the street side and get up the curb. Spaces can be temporarily marked with tape to designated sizes and a sign can be erected. Ready-made signs are available from sign companies and city/state traffic departments and highway departments. Signs directing people to an accessible entrance should be provided.

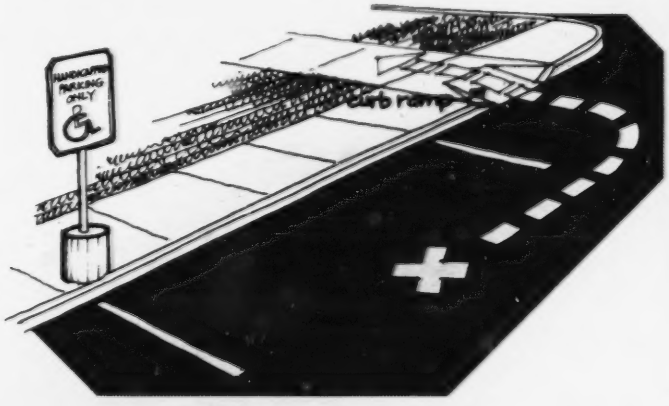
Accessible Parking Spaces



Temporary Accessible Parking



Temporary Accessible Parallel Parking



International Accessibility Symbol

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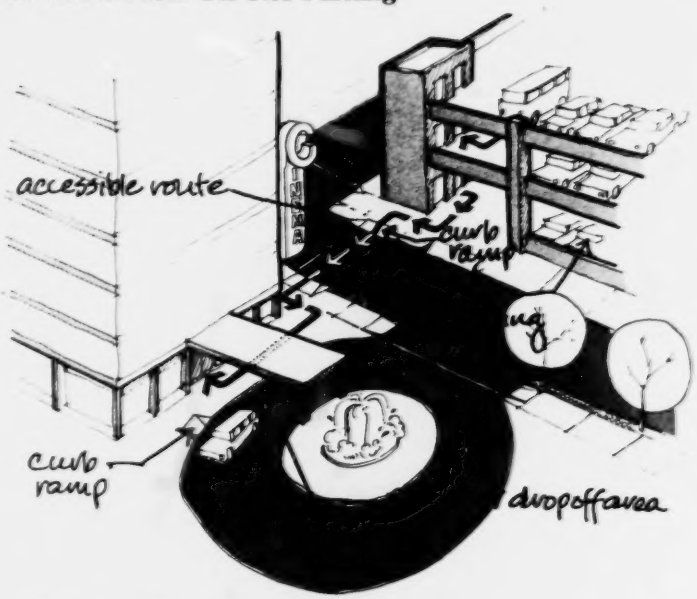
Off-site Parking

If off-site parking is available, determine if there is an accessible route of travel from the off-site parking to the entrance of your facility.

Accessible Route From Off-Site Parking

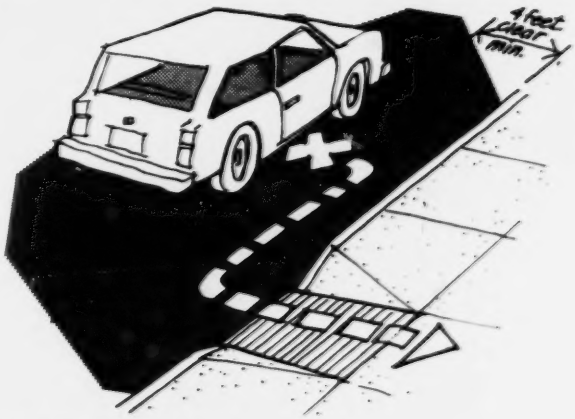


Passenger Loading Zone

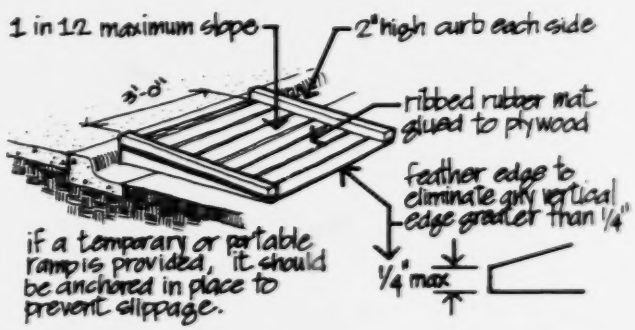
A passenger loading zone should have at least 4 feet of clear space beside the vehicle for pull-up space. The passenger loading zone should be on an accessible route to the building.

Curbs at passenger drop-off zones should be ramped. If no curb ramp is provided, a temporary ramp can be installed.

Passenger Loading Zone



Temporary Wood Curb Ramp


1 in 12 maximum slope
2" high curb each side
3'-0"
ribbed rubber mat glued to plywood
feather edge to eliminate any vertical edge greater than 1/4"
1/4" max
if a temporary or portable ramp is provided, it should be anchored in place to prevent slippage.

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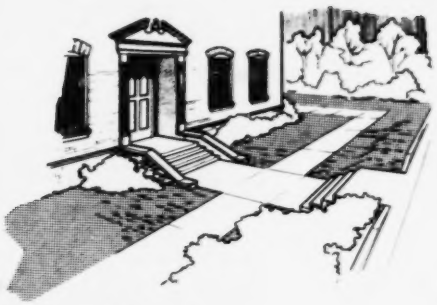
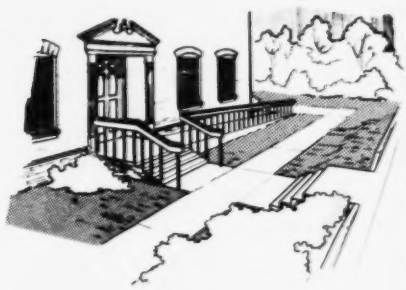
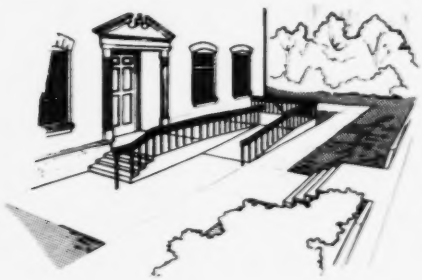
Existing Building



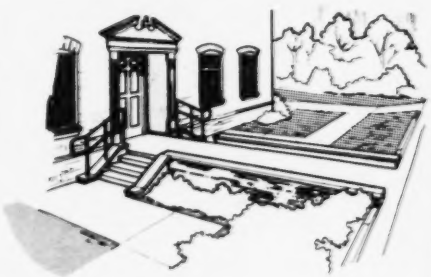
Straight Run Ramp



Switch-back Ramp

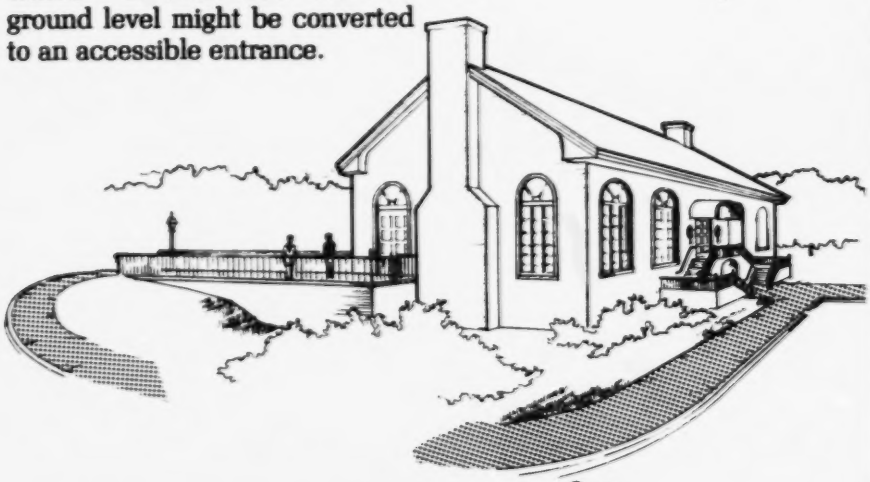


Earthwork Bridge



Other Entrance Locations

When existing main entrances are difficult to modify for accessibility or where modifications would seriously damage the appearance or historic value of a structure, a window or other door close to ground level might be converted to an accessible entrance.



3. Entrances and Doors

An entrance to a building should be approached by a smooth, flat or gradually sloping surface. An accessible route should connect parking areas, drop-off zones, public transportation stops, or other buildings with the building entrance. (See requirements for Accessible Route, p. 24.) If existing buildings have entrance floor levels above or below ground level, modifications for access may require installation of ramps, bridges, mechanical lifts, or changes in the shape of the land to provide a smooth, gradually sloped surface.

Ramped Entrances

Most building standards specify ramps with a maximum slope of 8.3% which is 1 foot of rise for every 12 feet of horizontal run. Consequently, the ramp for a 4 foot rise must be at least 48 feet long plus the length of at least one level platform (5 feet).

Long ramps can be handled in a variety of ways: straight run, switch back, or L-shaped. However, level entrances are always preferred to ramps. In some instances, particularly in historic buildings, earth fill to change the entrance level may be the best solution. Also, interior ramps are always preferred to exterior ramps. Sometimes it is less expensive to build a ramp down to a lower level rather than constructing a ramp up to an upper level.

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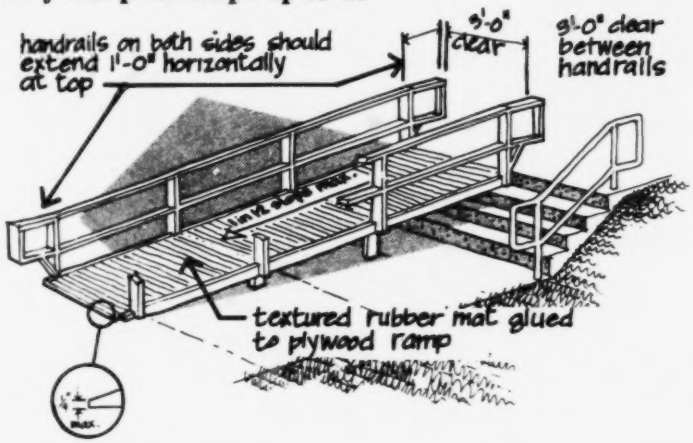
Temporary Ramps at Steps

If steps have a total rise of no more than 30", a temporary wood ramp can accommodate disabled people. Exterior plywood and treated lumber should be used. A rubber mat surface is recommended, but it should be fully glued in place. Ramps more than 6" in height must have handrails as shown.

Ramps can, of course, be built over steps more than 30" in height, but since they must be 12 feet long for each 1 foot of rise, they become impractical as temporary facilities. Long ramps also require level rest platforms 5 feet long every 30 feet.

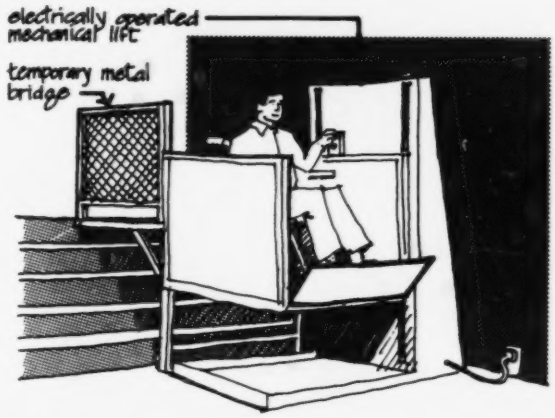
Temporary Ramp for Steps up to 30"


handrails on both sides should extend 1'-0" horizontally at top
3'-0" clear
3'-0" clear between handrails
textured rubber mat glued to plywood ramp

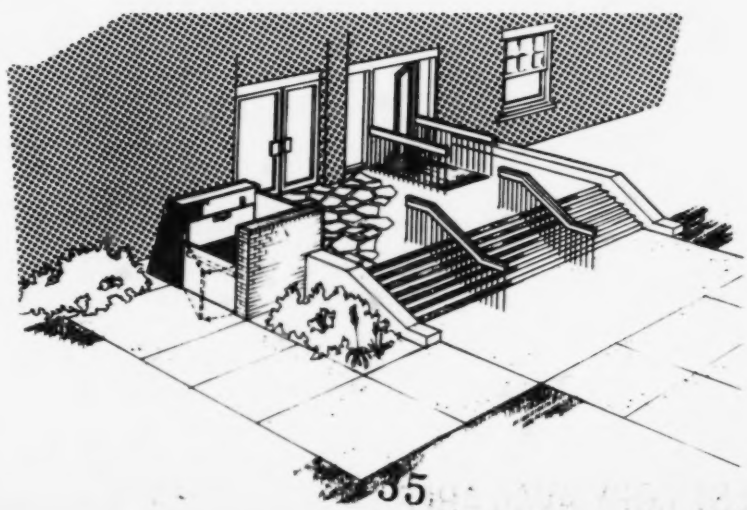
Lifts at Steps

If steps exceed 30" in height or if there is not enough space to install a ramp, a mechanical wheelchair lift might be installed. Such lifts are available from several sources and they can be permanently installed or temporarily located with a movable metal bridge to go over the steps.

Mechanical Lift for Steps over 30"



Mechanical Lift Installation



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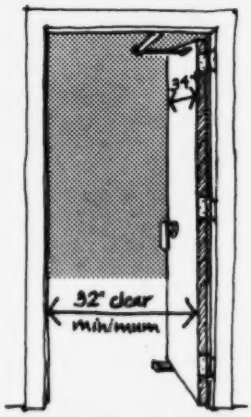
Doorways and Thresholds

Adult wheelchairs are 27" to 32" wide. Doorways, therefore, should be a minimum of 32" clear when the door is standing open. Most exterior doorways are 36" wide, but interior doors are often narrower. All doorways need a 5 foot by 5 foot level and clear area on the pull side. The door should have a kickplate and lever-type handle. Thresholds should slope and not be more than 1/2" high. Weather stripping at the bottom edge of the door is preferred. Door closers can be adjusted or removed so doors will open more easily.

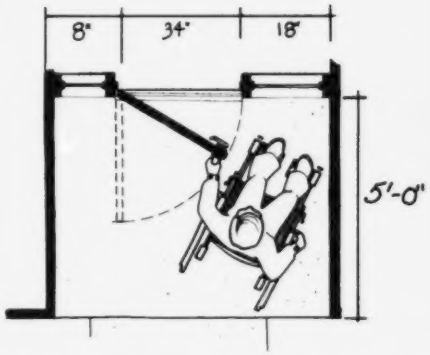
In temporary situations *only*, doors with a clear opening as narrow as 28" can be used by some disabled people. A narrow door can be used only if the door can stand open by itself and if there is plenty of space on both sides of the door to allow a person using a wheelchair to line up with the opening before passing through it.

Sometimes interior doors can be removed to gain a few more inches of clearance when privacy, security, and ventilation requirements allow.

32" Minimum Clear Width



Clear Space to Side of Door



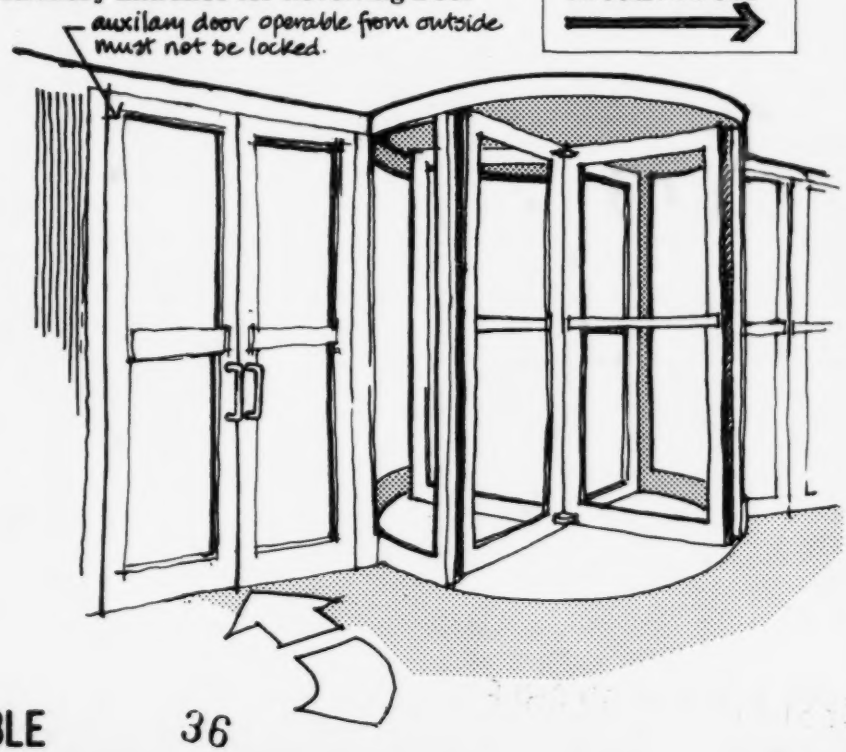
Revolving Doors

Many disabled people cannot use revolving doors or turnstiles. If either exists in an arts facility, there must be a route around them or disabled people cannot enter the building.

Often there is an ordinary door for emergency exit only next to a revolving door. These exit doors are usually not operable from the outside but they can be converted to be used as an entrance.

If a swinging door is not located near a revolving door, look for another entrance. If another entrance provides access for disabled people, a sign should be posted at the revolving door directing people to the usable door.

Auxiliary Entrance for Revolving Door



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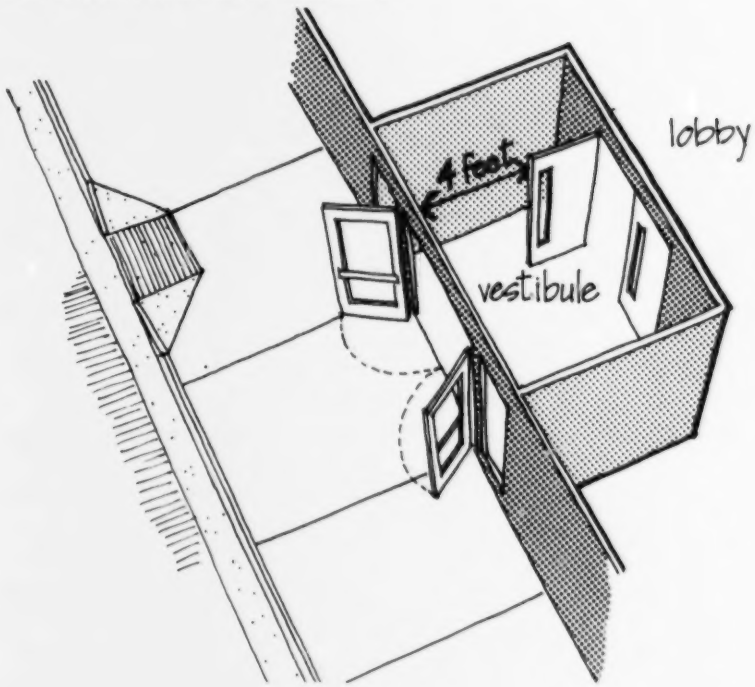
Double Door Vestibule

The more doors an entrance has, the more likely it is that disabled people will need assistance.

Double door vestibules with limited manuevering space can trap disabled people who use wheelchairs. There should be at least 4 feet between the second door in its open position and the first door.

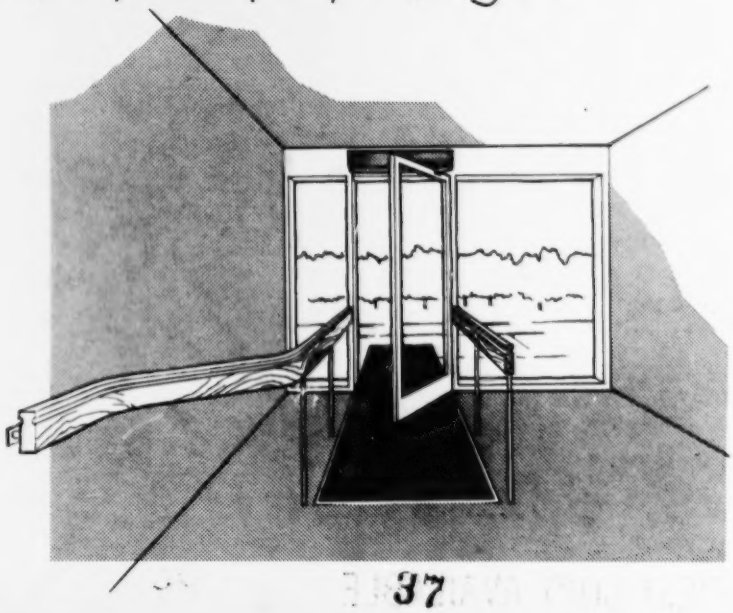
The best entrance for disabled people is one which has power operated doors. As a temporary solution, the inside or second door can be removed or propped open.

Double Door Vestibule at Entrance



Power Operated Door at Entrance

If swinging power operated doors are used for two-way traffic, the activating and safety mats as well as guard rails must extend well in front of the door swing to prevent anyone from being hit by the opening door.



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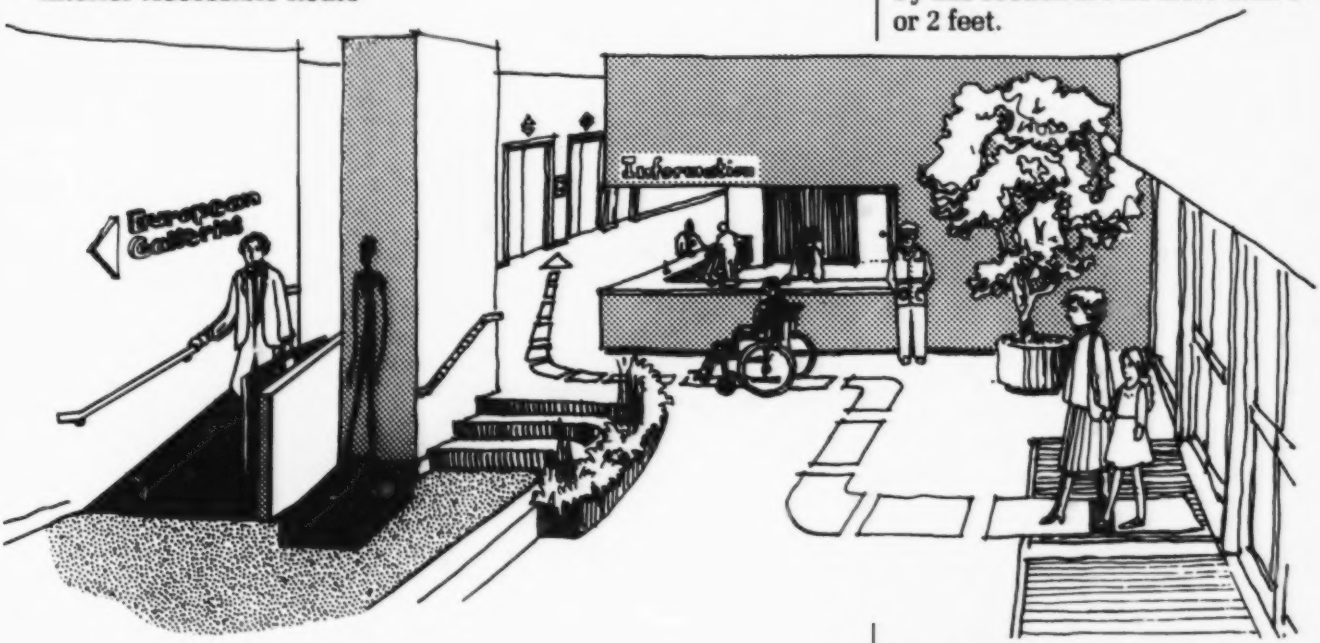
4. Interior Circulation

This section covers problems in horizontal circulation on any given floor. It does not cover the problem of getting from one floor to another which is discussed in the next section on vertical circulation. The changes in level covered by this section are no more than 1 or 2 feet.

Interior Accessible Route



Interior Accessible Route

Inside a building, people should be able to move about using a continuous pathway that is level, firm, unobstructed, and at least 36" wide. If possible, provide seating along the way for people who need to rest. The accessible route is not necessarily the shortest route; some people may want to know the shortest way, even if it has a step or two. See also Accessible Route, p. 24, and Protruding Objects, p. 33.

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Clearance for Aisles

Disabled people who use mobility aids such as wheelchairs, walkers, or crutches and braces require more space in which to maneuver. The average adult-sized wheelchair uses about 30″ x 48″ of floor space. Because at least 4 feet is required for a person in a wheelchair and a walking person to pass, and 5 feet for two people in wheelchairs to pass, it is recommended that all aisles be a minimum width of 5 feet.

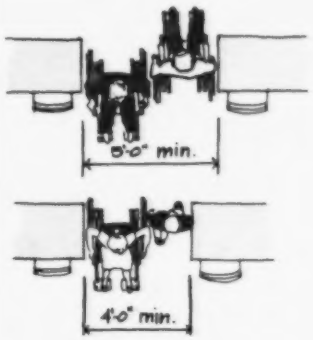
Interior Changes in Level

Abrupt changes in level are one of the most common problems for disabled people in buildings. Small changes in level up to 6″ in height can be eliminated by using wedges or small ramps similar to those on page 24. A series of steps might require a ramp or lift.

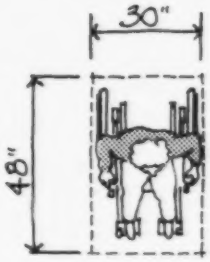
Interior Ramps. The best solution to interior changes in level is a permanent ramp. Finish material can match surrounding materials but the ramp surface should be textured rubber and *not* carpet. Such ramps can be expensive but a permanent installation will be used by many and is an advantage in moving exhibits, equipment, and the like.

Temporary Ramps. For temporary situations, wood ramps with substantial metal handrails on each side and a textured rubber surface can be used. Portable metal ramps are another temporary solution. These folding lightweight ramps have small curbs and no handrails, and they should not be used by disabled people without assistance. If provided, they should not be left in place unattended.

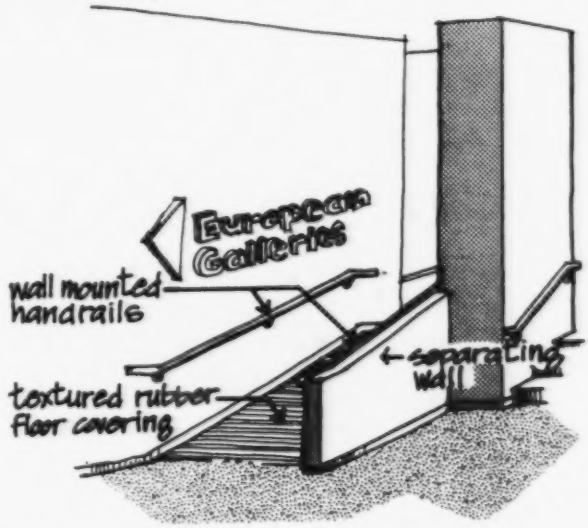
Clearance for Aisles



Clear Floor Space



Permanent Ramp



Portable Metal Ramp

Temporary Wood Ramp

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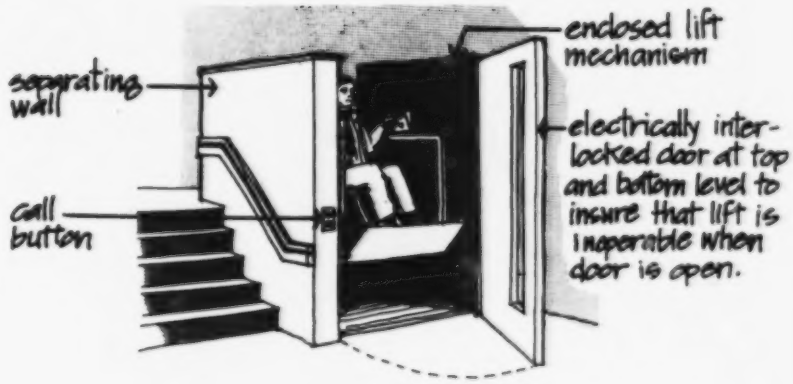
Vertical Lift


enclosed lift mechanism
separating wall
electrically interlocked door at top and bottom level to insure that lift is inoperable when door is open.
call button

Protruding Object Hazard

Protruding Object Warning

Interior Lifts. Mechanical wheelchair lifts can be used indoors. Lifts require power and their controls may be difficult for some to operate, but they are useful where there is not enough space for a ramp. Lifts can be enclosed with walls and interlocked gates to make a safe and attractive installation. Instructions for operation should be posted on or near the lift.

Split Level Facilities. In arts facilities where food services, shops or other amenities are available, these services must also be available to disabled people. This does not mean that every space must be made accessible. The general rule should be that if disabled people can enter the establishment without assistance and be served along with others, no changes are required.

If an entire business or service area is elevated by a few steps or is otherwise inaccessible, then ramps, or lifts, must be installed.

Protruding Objects

Wall-mounted elements such as telephone enclosures, fire extinguishers, or signs can be hazardous to a blind person who uses a long cane for mobility because the cane passes below the object and the person walks into it. A simple solution is to place detectable objects such as ashtrays, planters, or waste receptacles on the floor under the hazardous object. Be sure not to block the clear floor space provided to allow a wheelchair to pull up to the object.

Handrails or objects with supports widely spaced so that a cane passes between or beneath them without contact can also be a problem.

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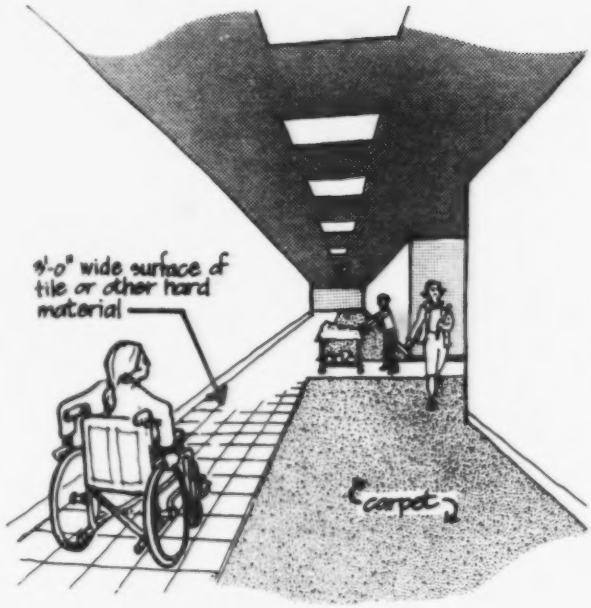
Carpet

Soft carpet makes using wheelchairs, crutches, canes, and walkers very difficult, and reduces the effectiveness of a cane used by blind people. There is no adequate test for determining which type of carpet is best or worst. In general, all carpet is difficult for people who use wheelchairs. The dense, thin commercial carpets are the best, but any carpet with a pad underneath is very difficult or impossible for some to negotiate.

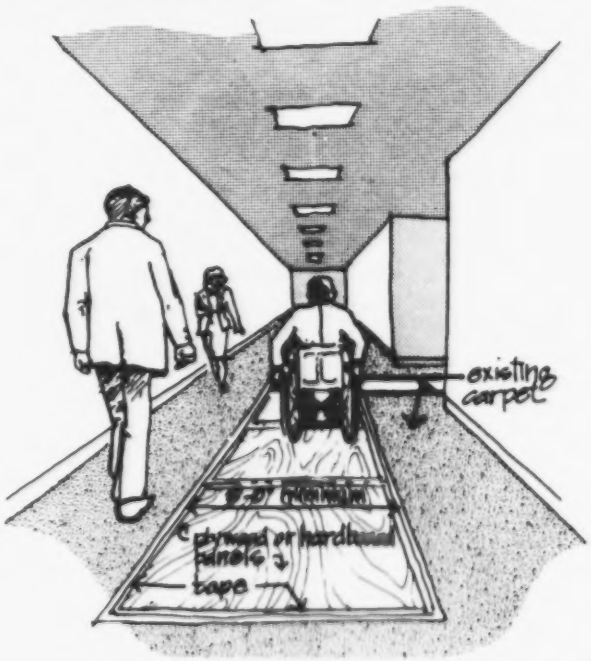
If an accessible route is completely carpeted, some changes should be made. The best way to solve the problem of carpet is to remove a 3 foot wide strip of carpet along one wall and replace it with tile or vinyl covering. This "roadway" also provides an excellent guide for blind people who can easily follow the hard surface.

A temporary solution to the carpet problem is to place panels of plywood or hard material over the carpet to form a hard surface pathway. The panels must be at least 3 feet wide and taped to each other and to the carpet to prevent the panels from slipping and people from tripping on the edges. Carpet tape is useful for this purpose.

Permanent Hard Surface Path



Temporary Path Over Carpet



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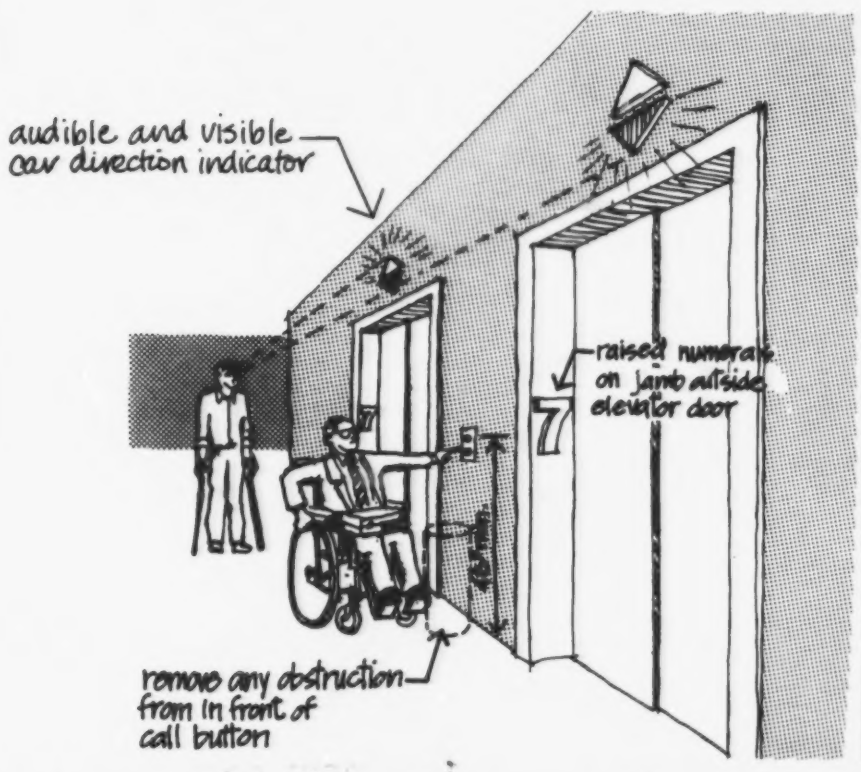
5. Vertical Circulation

Your arts program will probably be housed in a facility that meets one of these conditions:

- It is on one level throughout with no changes in level greater than 1 to 2 feet, and has no stairs and no elevators, in which case you can skip this section.
- It occupies several floors but they are *all* connected by elevators. In this case, read Existing Elevators, (below), to see if yours are usable by everyone. If stairs are also used between floors, they should be reviewed and modified if necessary.
- It occupies more than one floor and these floors are connected only by stairs. You have a serious problem and should refer to Adding an Elevator p. 37. Your best move in this situation may be to relocate as many of your programs and functions as you can to accessible areas. Then you may find that you need to modify only some of the inaccessible space.

Elevator Lobby


audible and visible car direction indicator
raised numerals on jamb outside elevator door
7
remove any obstruction from in front of call button

Existing Elevators

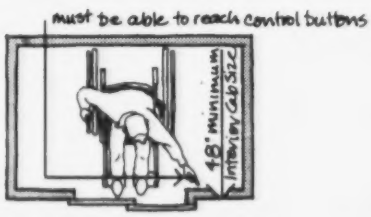
If your building is equipped with elevators, they may be perfectly accessible or they may need some improvements to make them usable by everyone.

Elevator Lobbies. Call buttons must be no more than 48" above the floor. Floor indicators should light up and ring to announce a car's arrival so blind and deaf people can perceive them. If elevators are not so equipped, some people require assistance.

The raised numeral in the elevator door jamb allows a blind person leaving an elevator to determine the floor number. Raised numerals and braille can be easily added. They should be at least 2" high and raised at least 1/16"

Elevator Cab. Elevator size is critical for people who use wheelchairs. Most adult size wheelchairs fit within a 30" x 48" floor space. If an elevator has at least a 30" x 48" clear floor space inside, it should accommodate a person in a wheelchair. Elevators should have enough space to allow people to turn around inside. By pulling in and backing out or vice versa, most people using wheelchairs can fit in an elevator which is as small as 48" from the door to the back wall. The question is, can they reach the controls once on board?

Minimum Cab Size



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Elevator Control Panel. The top elevator control button and the emergency controls should be no more than 54" above the floor. Otherwise, some people will not be able to reach them and will always need help using the elevators. One solution involves installing an auxiliary panel which can be applied over the existing panel. This new panel is connected to the controls and lowers the control buttons. This is a permanent installation which will have to be made by the builders.

Elevator control buttons should have raised numerals and braille beside them so they can be identified by blind people. Inexpensive, adhesive-backed, raised numerals can be added to existing elevator panels. Both braille and Arabic numerals may be used but braille should not be used without the Arabic since only a small percentage of blind people use braille. Embossed plastic labels in either version can be made with a label maker.

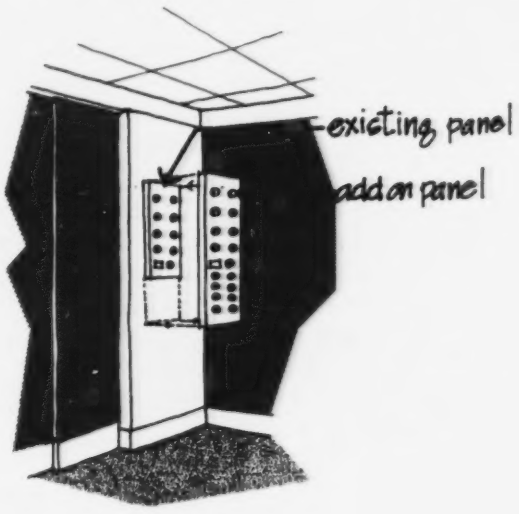
Stairs

Although stairs must not be the only way of moving between levels, many disabled people will use them and they should be safe to use and provide support and guidance.

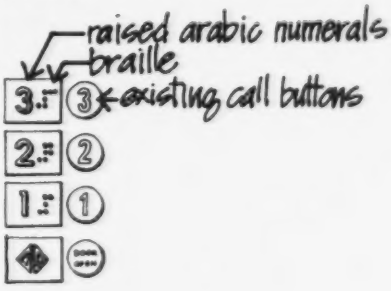
Handrails should be provided on both sides of stairs, and should continue around the landings. Handrails must extend 1 foot horizontally beyond the top and bottom steps. Where stairs will be used by children, a second, lower handrail should be installed.

If handrails exist but do not have horizontal extensions, they

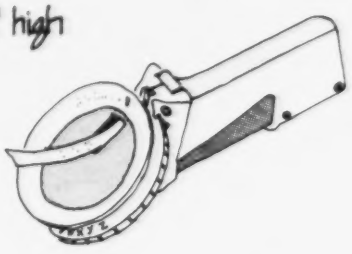
Add-on Control Panel



Add-on Raised Numerals and Braille



Plastic Label Maker



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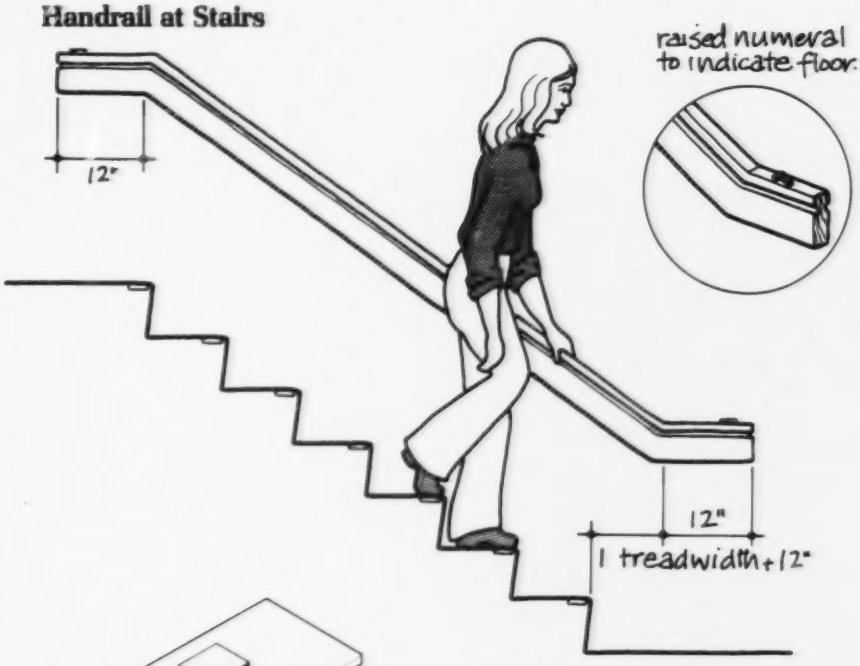
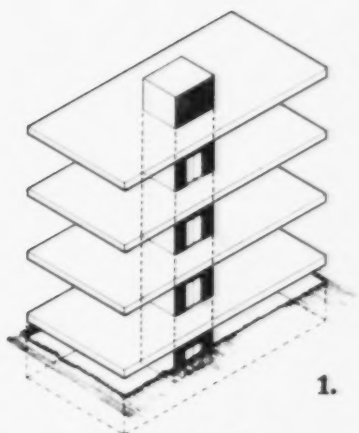
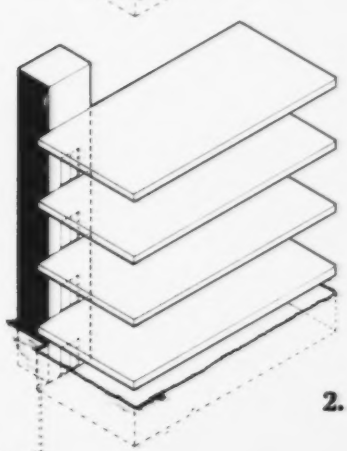
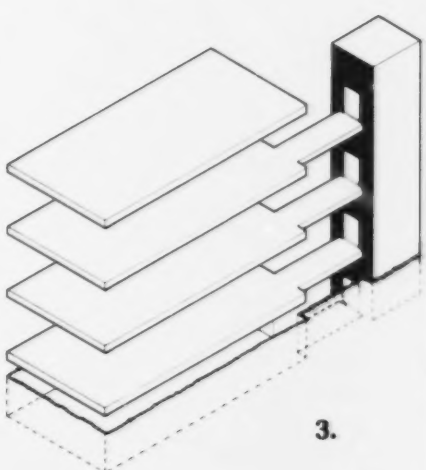
Handrail at Stairs



Elevator Shaft Locations







should be modified or replaced. If horizontal extensions cannot be installed on both handrails, they should be installed on at least one.

Adding an Elevator

Installing an elevator may be the most effective and, in the long run, the least expensive solution to your problems of inaccessible floor levels. There are three ways to add an elevator:

1. Elevator shafts can be placed inside existing buildings if a common accessible space can be located on each floor which does not interfere with heating and ventilating systems nor with major structural framing for the building. The building will have to be closed during construction and floors and roof will be remodeled to accommodate shafts.

2. Elevator shafts can be placed against an exterior wall of an existing building if a common accessible space can be located on each floor at the same spot on the exterior wall to serve as lobby space. Adding an elevator shaft to the outside of the building will not significantly interfere with mechanical or structural systems in the buildings and will not disrupt operation of the building during construction.

3. Elevator shafts can stand free of existing buildings and be connected by bridges to floor levels. Free standing elevator shafts will not interfere with mechanical or structural systems in the building and will not disrupt operation of the building during construction.

If adding an elevator is too expensive or not structurally possible, there are a few more things you can try.

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Ramps

Ramps are almost out of the question for connecting floor to floor, but they might work if you have *a lot* of floor space you can give up. Remember, every foot of rise will require 12 feet of run, and every 30 feet of run will require a 5 foot rest platform. In addition, 5 foot level platforms must be provided at both top and bottom. Therefore, connecting two floors that are ten feet apart floor to floor will take at least 145 feet of ramp. Unless you can turn this situation to your advantage and make the ramp usable floor area, as in the Guggenheim Museum or Boston Aquarium, you probably won't want to do it.

Extended ramps are also a very poor solution for the wheelchair user as many people are not able to push themselves up such a long slope.

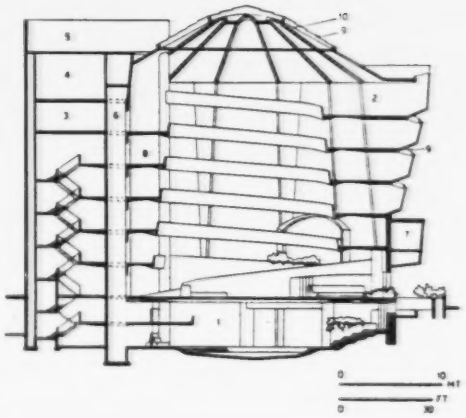
Mechanical Platform Lifts

Mechanical lifts can be placed over existing stairs. Equipped with platforms, these lifts can carry a person in a wheelchair. Equipped with a seat, they are usable by walking disabled people who cannot climb stairs.

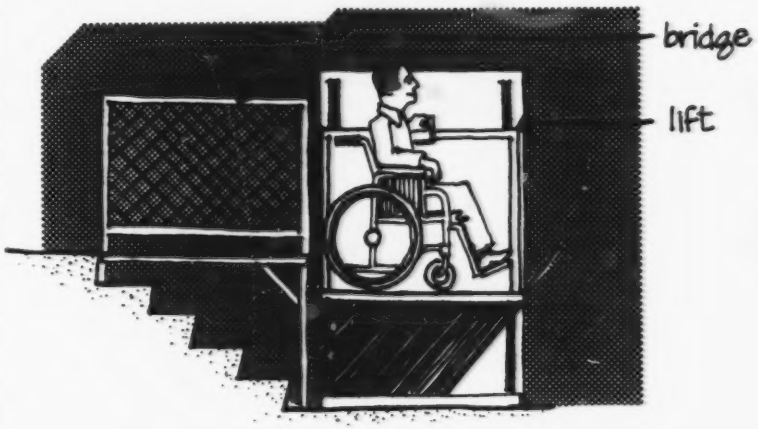
There are two types of lifts, vertical and inclined. Vertical lifts are placed at the bottom of stairs and rise vertically. A bridge is built across from the top of the stair to the lift in its up position. These lifts cannot be used to go between floors.

Inclined lifts travel on a track mounted on the wall beside the stair. Inclined lifts travel over the stairs. Most can be folded out of

Guggenheim Museum



Mechanical Platform Lifts



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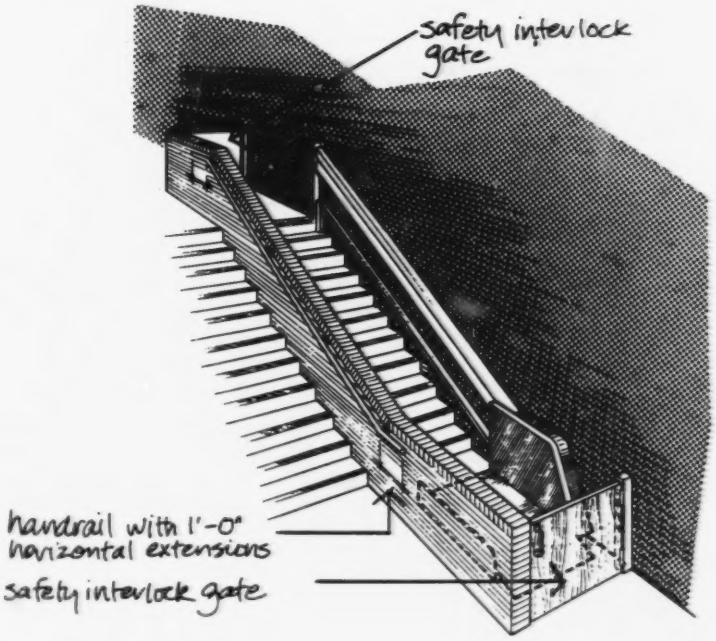
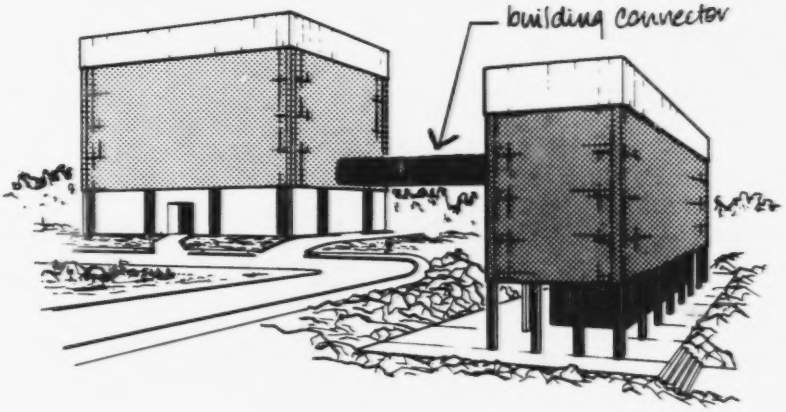
Inclined Lift



Bridge Between Buildings



the way when not in use. Some jurisdictions restrict their use on narrow flights of stairs.

Lifts are often the only solution to changes in level. They vary widely in price, and fire and elevator codes may apply to their installation. Some codes require them to be enclosed so people will not get near them while they operate. Lift companies can provide advice and information on the use of their lifts. Instructions for operation should be posted on or near the lift.

Bridging

If only two or three floors are involved, and if there is an adjacent accessible building with an elevator, you might be able to install bridges between the floors of the two buildings. Again, there may be many problems to this solution, especially if a disabled person has to cross the bridge to the other building, trek to the elevator, ride the elevator, trek back to the bridge, and cross back into your building.

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6. Water Fountains

For 504 compliance, at least one water fountain should be accessible in each area.

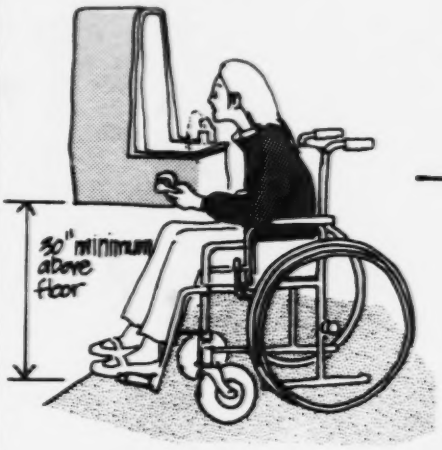
Water fountains can be used by most disabled people if the spout is no more than 32" to 36" above the floor.

The best type of water fountain for people in wheelchairs is one which has at least 30" of clear space between the bottom of the apron and the floor, and which has hand-operated controls.

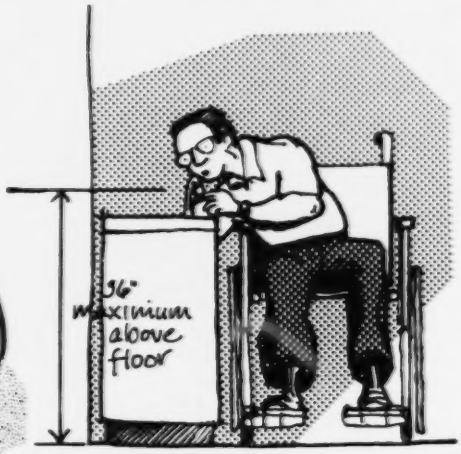
A good temporary solution when existing fountains are too high is to install a paper cup dispenser and mount it no more than 40" above the floor. If existing fountains have only foot-operated controls, cup dispensers will still be necessary and some disabled people will need assistance.

It may be possible to add a side-mounted fountain to the existing facility without cutting into the wall. Lever-type handles should be added, however, because pedals cannot be used by people in wheelchairs. In some cases, it may be more economical to install a new, lower water fountain than to relocate or modify an existing installation.

Minimum Apron Clearance

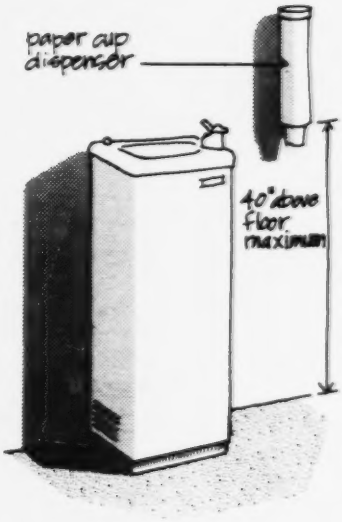


Maximum Spout Height



Add-on Side-mounted Fountain

Temporary Solution



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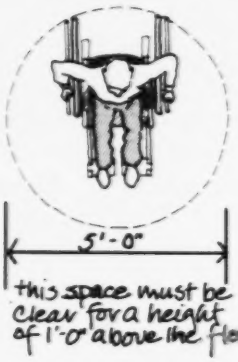
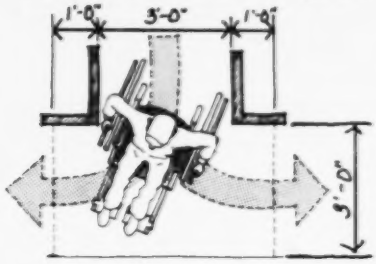
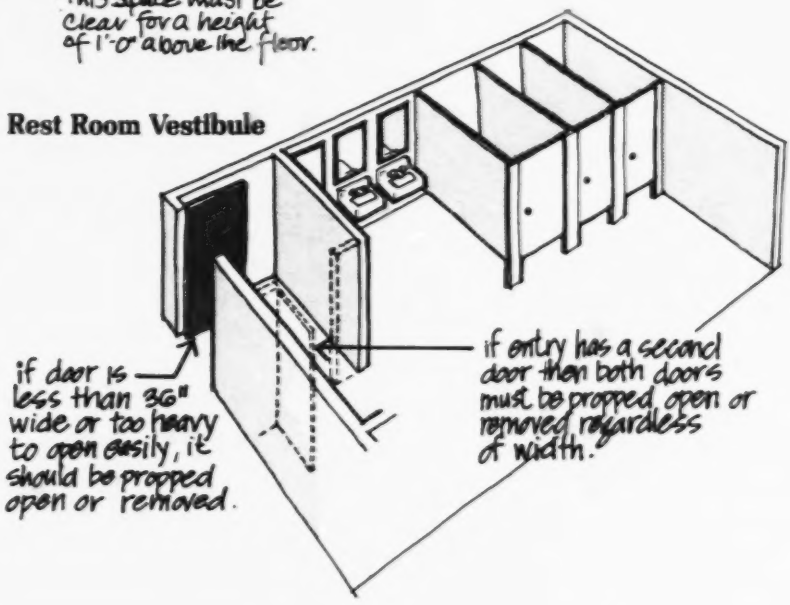
Circular Clear Floor Space



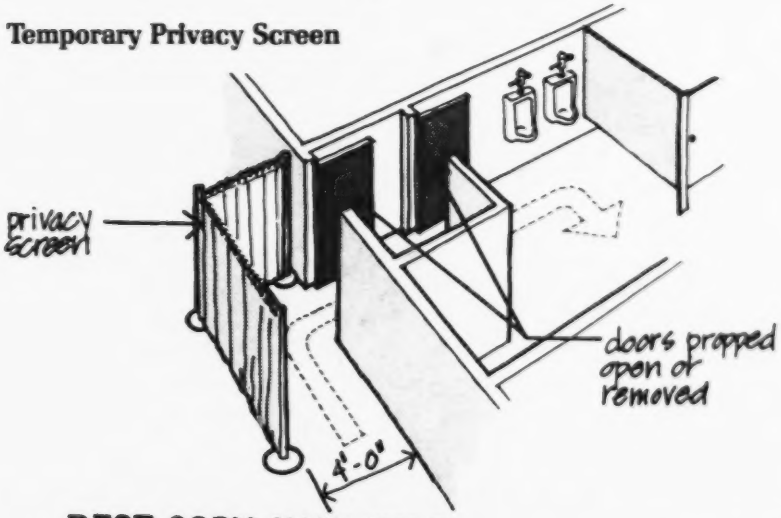
T-shaped Clear Floor Space



Rest Room Vestibule


if door is less than 36" wide or too heavy to open easily, it should be propped open or removed.
if entry has a second door then both doors must be propped open or removed regardless of width.

Temporary Privacy Screen



7. Rest Rooms

Rest Room Doors and Vestibules

Doors to be used by disabled people should provide a 32" clear opening with the door in the open position. This usually requires a 36" wide door. The width required is determined by the width of a wheelchair plus clearance necessary for maneuvering, and for pushing or pulling a door open.

As a temporary solution when rest rooms have privacy screens or vestibules, propping the door open or removing it can often increase maneuvering space. Where privacy will be compromised, a temporary privacy screen can be installed outside the room. Standard exhibit booth curtains are useful for this purpose.

Toilet Stalls

Narrow Toilet Stalls. Toilet stalls for disabled people must have an outswinging door that, when open, provides a clear opening of 32". This usually means that the door itself will be at least 33" wide. The stall should be 36" wide inside and there should be two 54" long by 1-1/2" diameter grab bars mounted horizontally on each side 33" above the floor. The space between the grab bar and the wall should be no more than 1-1/2".

Temporary Changes. Existing stalls that are at least 34" wide can be made temporarily accessible.

1. Pick a stall against a wall preferably at the end of the room.

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2. Install grab bars as specified above. These must be wall-anchored to support a 250 lb. load. This is a permanent modification.

3. Remove existing narrow door and wall-side jamb.

4. Install overhead rod and privacy curtain.

If the existing stall is less than 34" wide, the partitions might be moved to widen the stall to 36". This will involve changing adjacent stalls and will be a permanent modification.

The 5 foot wide toilet stall. A 5 foot wide toilet stall is usable by more disabled people than the narrow stall because it allows plenty of room to move around and provides space for an attendant if necessary.

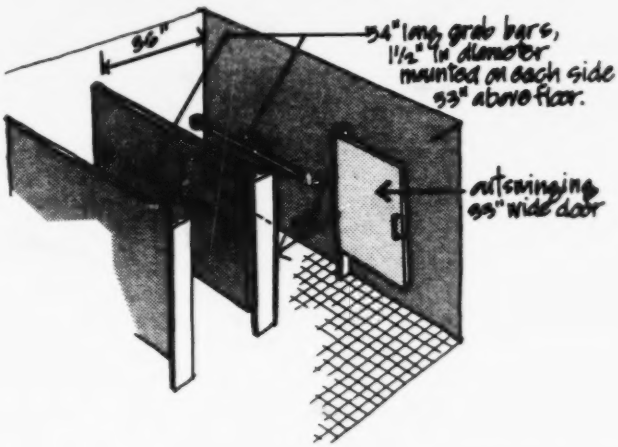
If a 5 foot wide stall does not exist in a rest room, there is no way to furnish one temporarily but a very successful permanent modification is possible.

Since standard toilet stalls are usually 30" wide by 54" long, they cannot be made accessible because they are too narrow. However, two 30" stalls can be combined to make one 5 foot stall. To do this, one water closet and one partition are removed and grab bars are added.

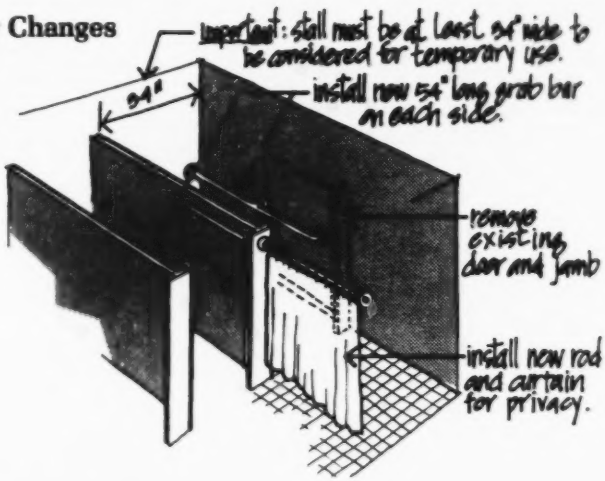
Lavatories, Mirrors, Soap and Towel Dispensers

Lavatories used by disabled people should have 30" clearance between the bottom edge of the apron and the floor. The faucets should have handles that can be operated without grasping and twisting. Levers and push buttons (the kind that require light pressure and leave the water running for a while) are good types to use.

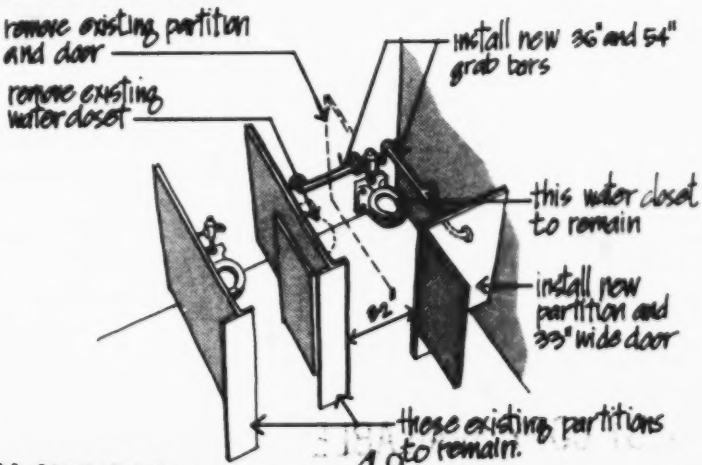
Minimum Accessible Toilet Stall



Temporary Changes


important: stall must be at least 54" wide to be considered for temporary use.
54"
install new 54" long grab bar on each side.
remove existing door and jamb
install new rod and curtain for privacy.

5 Foot Wide Toilet Stall


remove existing partition and door
remove existing water closet
install new 36" and 54" grab bars
this water closet to remain
install new partition and 33" wide door
these existing partitions to remain.

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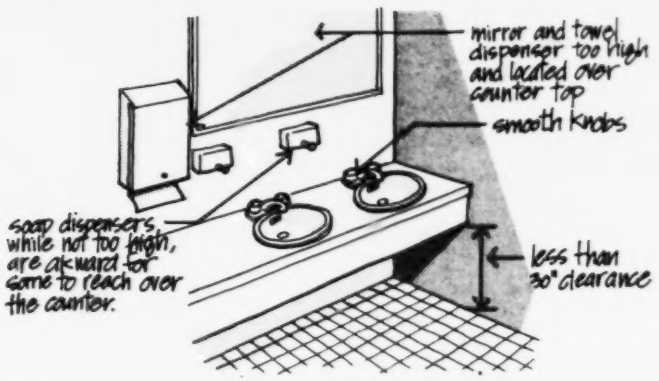
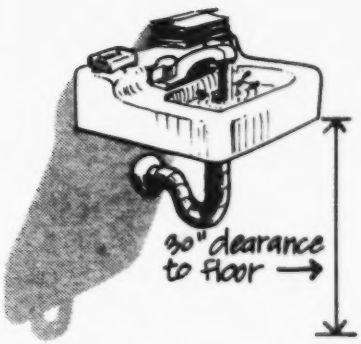
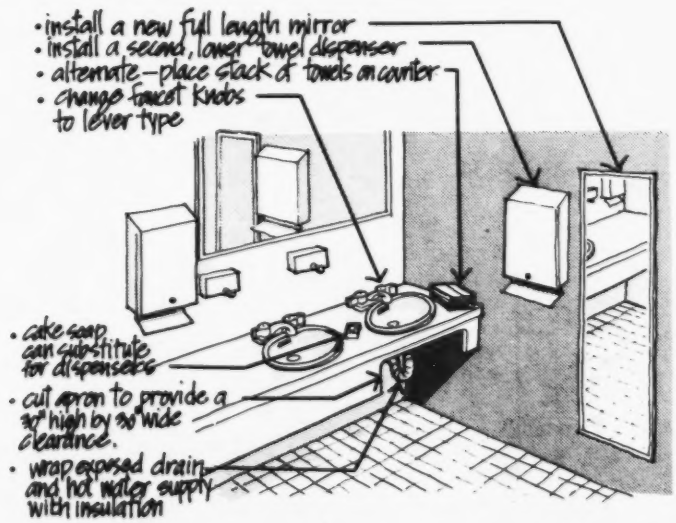
Problems at Lavatories


mirror and towel dispenser too high and located over counter top
smooth knobs
soap dispensers, while not too high, are awkward for some to reach over the counter.
less than 30" clearance

Minimum Apron Clearance



Modified Lavatory


• install a new full length mirror
• install a second, lower towel dispenser
• alternate—place stack of towels on counter
• change faucet knobs to lever type
• cake soap can substitute for dispensers
• cut apron to provide a 30" high by 30" wide clearance.
• wrap exposed drain and hot water supply with insulation

Mirrors should have bottom edges no more than 40" above the floor, and dispensers should be no more than 48" above the floor and not located over other obstructions or fixtures.

Following are some suggestions for modifications.

- Lavatory aprons can be cut to provide the necessary knee clearances.
- Where towel dispensers and mirrors are too high, it is usually less expensive and quicker to mount a new towel dispenser nearby and install a full-length mirror on another wall than it is to relocate the existing ones. The full-length mirror is good for everyone to use.
- A *temporary* solution to the towel height problem is simply to place towels on a shelf or table within reach of seated or short people.
- A good, inexpensive, temporary solution to the soap dispenser height problem is to provide cake soap.
- Smooth round faucet knobs should be removed and a type with a lever or other shape which can be operated without gripping should be installed.
- Exposed hot water pipes under any lavatory should be insulated to prevent burning the legs of people in wheelchairs.

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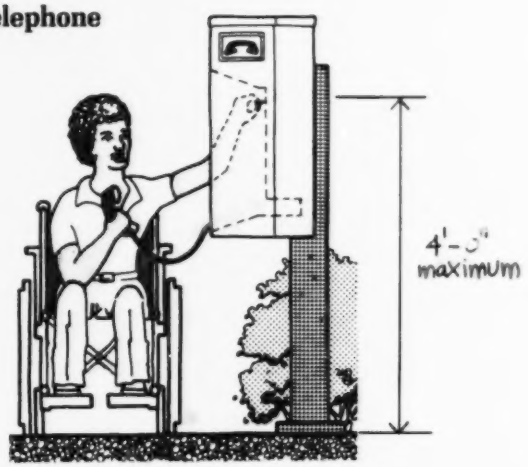
8. Telephones

Public telephones should be mounted in a clear space with the highest operable part (coin slot or dial) no more than 48" above the floor. If existing public telephones do not meet this requirement there is no temporary solution other than to make available a desk type telephone which disabled people can use.

Accessible Pay Telephone



9. Signage

Signs with emergency or directional information should be done in large letters and contrasting colors. The typeface should be simple and the surface of the sign well-lit and not glossy. Signs should also be used to direct disabled people to accessible entrances, telephones, and the like. Pictographs and international symbols should be included as often as possible. They can be understood by most people including those who cannot read or do not speak English.

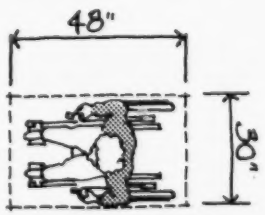
Readable Sign

Pictograph

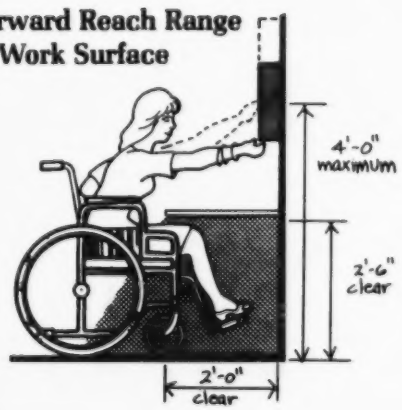
10. Clear Floor Space and Work Surfaces

Work surfaces should have a clear opening for knee and leg space of 2'-6" from the underside to the floor, and be at least 2 feet deep. People who use wheelchairs need a clear floor space 30" x 48" adjacent to a counter, work surface, or shelf in which to position the wheelchair. The clear floor space may be parallel to an object or perpendicular to it, but it must always be next to (not in) an accessible route.

Clear Floor Space



Forward Reach Range at Work Surface



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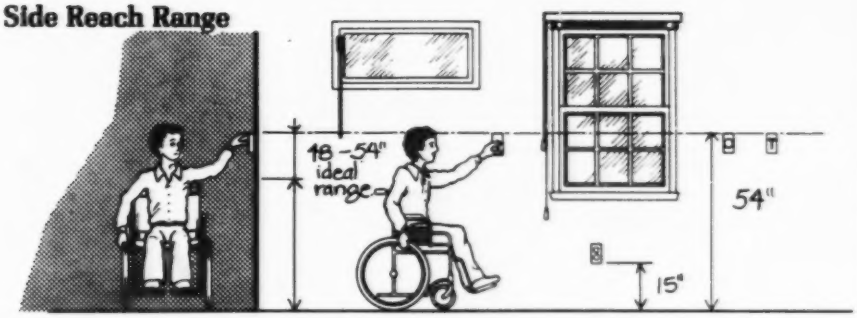
Side Reach Range

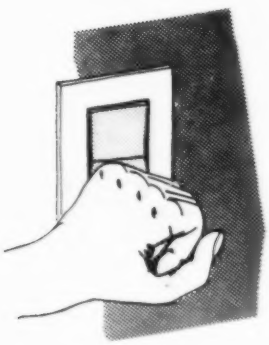


11. Reach Ranges

Because they are at a lower level than the average standing adult, disabled people in wheelchairs cannot easily reach objects placed higher than 4 feet from the floor.

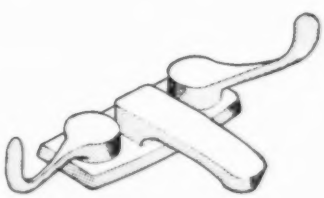
12. Controls and Hardware

Rocker Switch



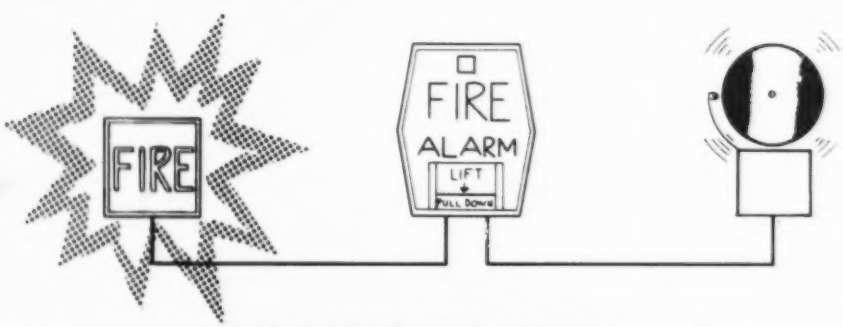
Controls and hardware include such items as door handles, thermostats, toilet flush controls, faucet handles, window cranks, fire alarms, light switches, and other operating mechanisms. Controls and hardware need to be mounted where short or seated people or people who cannot raise their arms can reach them. The most usable range is between 9" and 48" above the floor. Also, there has to be enough clear floor space for people in wheelchairs to get close to the control. In addition, controls must be easy to operate. Controls for operating equipment should be operable with one hand, not require gripping or twisting, nor more than 15 pounds of pressure. If you can work a control with a closed fist, most people will be able to work it. (See also Equipment Modification, p. 62.)

Lever Handles



13. Warning Signals

Audible and Visible Signals



Emergency warning systems should produce signals that can be perceived by both hearing and sight-impaired people. Signals that are exclusively bells or buzzers or flashing lights or warning signs are useless to people who cannot hear or see them.

Many new electronic devices provide warning signals that are both audible and visible.

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Being There

In addition to physical access to your programs, you must consider access to the content. Can everyone understand as much as possible what is going on? Are materials presented for seeing, hearing, and touching wherever appropriate?

Program content includes the exhibitions, lectures, films, plays, concerts, etc. that you produce or present, as well as materials about the programs — catalogues, scripts, librettos, brochures, maps, publicity, etc. The people who must have access to the program content include everyone — audience, performers, participants, staff, visitors, and volunteers — any of whom may have a communication disability. In this section we will look at some communication techniques that can help you make your programs enjoyable for everyone.

Communicating With Hearing Impaired People

Pencil and Paper

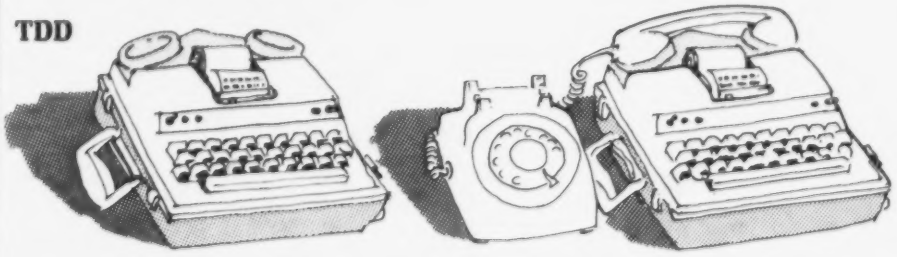
In a conversation between a hearing impaired person and a hearing person, either person may have trouble understanding the other. Written messages usually work, so be sure to have pencils and paper available.

The TDD

TDD's (Telecommunications Device for the Deaf) and TTY's (Teletypewriters) are lightweight, portable, electronic machines which provide written communication via standard telephones. TDD's have either a printout or a visual display and typewriter keyboard. The telephone receiver is placed in the TDD cradle and typed messages can be sent or received.

Since telephone communication with a deaf person is impossible without a TDD, one should be provided so that deaf people can call in and out. For example, a theater that includes deaf people in its mailings will want to be able to receive calls from them about ordering tickets or inquiring about performance schedules or interpreted performances.

TDD



Interpreters

For deaf people, *certified* interpreters are absolutely necessary. The interpreter uses either American Sign Language or Signed English and must be able to reverse translate both. (In reverse translation, the deaf person signs and the interpreter translates the signs into speech for hearing people.) Some deaf people can lip read. Interpreters should be able to perform both manual and oral interpretation. The average length of time a person can comfortably interpret and keep the signs large and readable is about 45 minutes; so several interpreters may be needed for long programs.

A common location for a sign language interpreter is at the end of the speakers' table or beside the speaker. As shown, a dark, solid color, fabric drapery should be hung behind the interpreter. This curtain eliminates visual clutter in the background and makes it

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easier to see the hand positions. Interpreters will usually wear dark clothing for the same reason. The curtain should be very wide in order to be behind the interpreter from any viewing angle. There should also be an overhead light source to illuminate the interpreter.

An alternate and sometimes preferred arrangement is to have the interpreter stand on a raised step directly behind the person speaking. Deaf participants should be allowed or encouraged, but never forced, to sit immediately in front of the interpreter.

The easiest way to find an interpreter is to contact the local council or commission for the deaf. If further assistance is needed, contact a community service center for the hearing impaired or the director of the state Vocational Rehabilitation Office, or write the Registry of Interpreters (see sidebar on Certified Interpreters).

Each state establishes its own fee for interpreters based on the person's level of certification. Presently the cost of a certified interpreter is $10-$20 an hour. A word of caution: someone who knows sign language but is not a certified interpreter may have a limited sign vocabulary and may not adequately translate the message. See also, More About Interpreters, p. 70, and Lectures, p. 74.

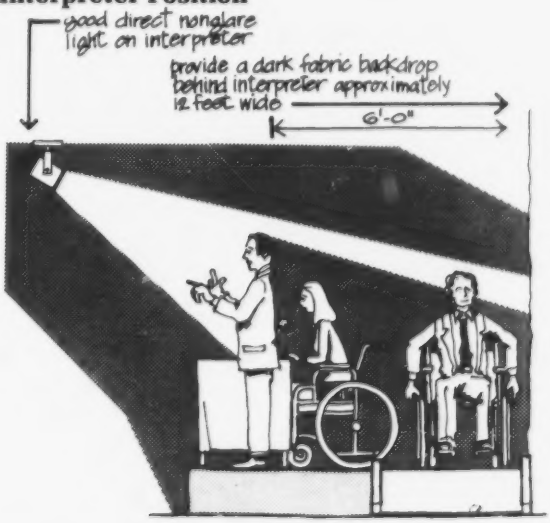
Certified Interpreters

Certification means that an interpreter has been evaluated according to the National Evaluation System for Interpreters/Transliterators and issued one of several types of certificates. Complete information on certification of interpreters is available from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. (RID). The RID also issues an annual Regional Directory of Services for Deaf Persons. This Directory is organized by state within each of the ten Federal Regions and lists all services available to deaf people including a roster of certified interpreters.

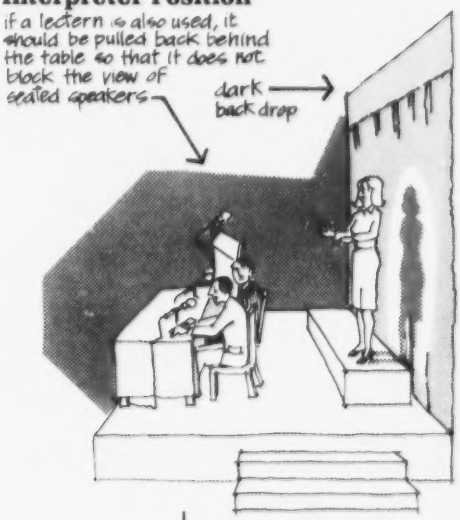
For a complete list of books and publications on interpreting, write or call the RID National Office:

Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf
814 Thayer Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(301) 588-2406 (Voice/TDD)

Interpreter Position


good direct nonglare light on interpreter
provide a dark fabric backdrop behind interpreter approximately 12 feet wide
6'-0"

Alternate Interpreter Position


if a lectern is also used, it should be pulled back behind the table so that it does not block the view of seated speakers
dark back drop

Supplementary Materials

As much as possible, spoken material should also be available in print. Scripts, librettos, program notes, or lecture highlights enhance a hearing impaired person's understanding of the spoken material. In some cases you will want to present the complete text of a presentation such as poetry or a short slide show narrative; in others, a condensed version of the dialogue or narrative will help the person understand what is going on and allow him or her to focus on visual elements. Make supplementary materials available by mail ahead of

Interpretation for Handicapped Persons, a Handbook for Outdoor Recreation Personnel is available from:

National Park Service
Division of Interpretation
2001 Sixth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

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Captioning

For information on captioning for television and film contact:

National Captioning Institute
5203 Leesburg Pike
Falls Church, VA 22041
(703) 998-2400 (Voice/TDD)

Adapting Language

The following book is a guide to adapting language for deaf people: *Language Adaptations for Use by Deaf Audiences* by Constance Jacobson, available for $3.00 from:

The Education Department
Museum of Fine Arts
465 Huntington Avenue
Boston, MA 02115

time whenever possible, and let your audience know you provide this service.

For many deaf people who use signing, English is a "second language." Long, complicated sentences and elaborate language may be difficult to understand. A short, simple version of what is spoken is often preferable to a verbatim reproduction.

Captioning

Films, slide shows, and video productions can be captioned for deaf audiences. (Captioning is presenting spoken material in subtitles. Some television programs use "closed captioning" in which the subtitles can be seen only when the television set is equipped with a decoding device.) When you produce audio-visual materials, be sure to budget for captioning and hire professionals to do the job.

Sound Systems

It is very important to have the best quality sound amplification system possible. Hearing impaired people who use hearing aids have a great deal of difficulty with poor sound systems because the hearing aids amplify noises, hum, rattles, and squeals generated by the system.

Sound columns (multiple speakers) located in both front corners of the room are recommended along with an amplifier with frequency balancing. A participant with partial hearing may wish to sit near a sound column or speaker.

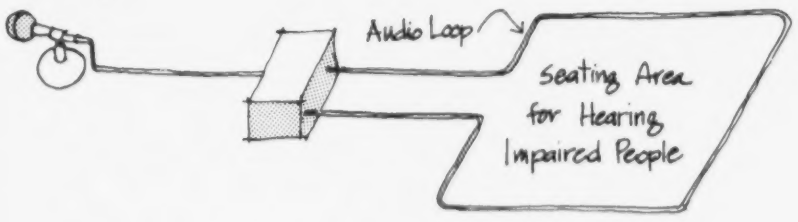
In some auditoria, special fixed seats with amplified sound connections for headphones may be provided. Hearing impaired people should be made aware of any such provisions.

Electronic lecterns with built-in speakers and amplifiers should not be used because they generally produce poor quality sound.

Auxiliary Listening Systems

In addition to a standard sound amplification system, there are auxiliary listening systems that make it possible for hearing impaired people to hear what is actually going on. Local or state organizations for deaf people will have more information on these systems.

Audio Loop



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For participants who wear hearing aids, you may wish to provide an audio loop system. An audio loop is a type of amplifier and antenna consisting of a wire which sets up a magnetic field which can be picked up by some hearing aids. The wire can be built-in or simply taped to the floor or walls. The wire runs around the room or a part of the room. Anyone sitting within the loop and wearing the appropriate hearing aid will receive the sound being transmitted by the amplifier.

Infrared, or wireless, listening systems transmit sound via invisible infrared light from the master sound system to a special, lightweight, wireless headset which is worn by the listener who can sit anywhere in the house. This system works from a series of emissions and needs no permanent installation. The size (and cost) of the system can be adjusted to the size of the house.

Communicating With Visually Impaired People

If you provide supplementary materials for a program, make them available for people to use before attending the event. Mail out materials if possible, and be sure to advertise their availability.

Large Print

Many partially sighted people who cannot read regular print can read large print if it is clear, well-lighted, and has a contrasting background. The easiest way to produce something in large print is to type the material on a typewriter equipped with a commercially available large print font. Typeset large print should be in a simple sans-serif face set at 14 to 18 points. Large print may be used for program materials as well as for exhibition labels and other displays. You may want to condense the content of very long materials when producing a large print version.

Braille

Not all blind people read braille. If braille materials have been requested, the number of pages of material as well as the total number of copies necessary will dictate which method of providing braille should be used.

Single copies can be produced by an experienced person using a brailler, a mechanical device similar to a typewriter. The brailler produces the embossed dots of the braille symbols. Multiple copies can be made by vacuum forming the pages or by braille presses. This work generally must be done by experienced braille printers. Local or state organizations for visually impaired people will know who can make braille copies.

Large Print and Braille

For recommendations and services regarding large print, write:

National Association for the Visually Handicapped
305 East 24th Street
Apartment 17-C
New York, NY 10010

Volunteers Who Produce Books: Braille, Large Type, Tape is a geographical directory of volunteer organizations available at no charge from:

Reference Section
National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped
The Library of Congress
Washington, DC 20542

Information on the nearest National Library Service branch for visually impaired people is also available.

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Maps

The Preparation of Orientation and Mobility Maps for the Visually and Physically Handicapped is available for $4.00 from:

Architectural Extension
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, OK 74078

For information on raised line mapping techniques, contact:

Dept. of Geography DP-10
University of Washington
Seattle, WA 98195

Radio Services

A nationwide list of radio services is available from:

American Foundation for the Blind
15 West 16th Street
New York, NY 10011

Audio Description

The Washington Ear provides technical assistance in developing audio description for performing arts and visual arts program.

The Washington Ear
35 University Blvd.
Silver, Springs, MD 20901
(301) 681-6636

Tactile Materials

Many graphic figures such as maps, diagrams, and charts, can be reproduced in a tactile (touchable) version. The techniques used for duplicating braille can be used to produce other tactile materials. Vacuum forming and thermoforming mold a thin plastic sheet using heat and a three-dimensional form or model.

Small scale models of buildings, exhibit layouts, or stage sets, for example, can help orient a visually impaired person. Models can also be used to reproduce art objects and exhibit pieces that are too large, too delicate, or too valuable to be handled directly.

Audio Tapes

Recording program materials on cassette tapes is a good way to provide program handouts to visually impaired participants. Since many visually impaired people cannot read braille or large print, tapes may be the most usable provision.

Readers

If materials that a visually impaired person can use are not available, there is one last option: to provide that person with a reader. This is a stop-gap measure, but will work if there is not a large volume of material to be read, for example, a program.

Radio Reading Services

Radio reading is another form of communication accessible to blind people. Channels for radio reading and information services are distributed across the country. Descriptions of current exhibitions and performances as well as lectures and readings can reach a large audience through broadcasting.

Sound Systems

Blind and visually impaired people are almost totally dependent upon sound as a communications medium, so it is very important to have the best quality sound system possible. Often built-in systems are of low or average quality. The better the quality of the sound, the better will be the level of comprehension.

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Communicating With Learning Impaired or Mentally Retarded People

Simple Language

Presentations especially for people with learning problems should be short, direct, and clear. The language should be simple, and should be supplemented with pictures as much as possible. The setting should be free from visual distractions and noise.

Pictures

Pictures can often supplement or substitute for written material. Many ideas can be explained more clearly if accompanied by illustrations, and traditional signs can usually be replaced by pictographs. Many standard signs, like those for rest rooms, telephones, or first aid, should be presented as pictographs.

Flexibility

Materials for learning disabled or mentally retarded people may often be presented as an introductory talk, a short lecture, or a tour. In preparing to talk to a group, keep the following in mind:

- focus clearly on one topic;
- keep your remarks short and the number of topics few;
- appeal to as many senses as possible; try to provide objects that people can handle;
- respond to interest or lack of it;
- make connections with already familiar ideas and objects.

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A Story

Years ago I was teaching a group of children in a New York public school, and one of them is one of the best dancers I've ever seen. He had the elevation to jump over cars, this little boy. It took me six months to discover he was deaf, and it was quite by accident. I looked at him and said, "Jump!" and the boy went into the air — whoosh! And I said, "Terrific!" I said, "Jump!" Whoosh! "Terrific," I said, "Do it again," and he didn't jump. You see, I'd turned my head and my back was to him. I faced him and I said, "Come on, jump!" Whoosh! "Good," Once more, turning my back to him, I said, "All together. Follow him. Jump! Everybody jump." He didn't. I said "Jump!!" He still didn't. The realization hit me — he'd been reading my lips. He's deaf. Fantastic!

I walked over to the school's principal and asked, "Why didn't you tell me?"

"Why should we?" the principal said. "He has to go through life. He's not going to have someone run ahead saying, 'This person can't hear.' He's got to learn how to deal with life."

I thought, "Wow! I am curious to see what can be done with other deaf children in dance." I'd never thought of it. I was ignorant — like those little boys that never thought they could dance. It was a revelation. So that's how I got involved with deaf children dancing.

How do I teach them? I teach them just like I teach anybody else. I usually put them together with the best dancers and say, "You'd better be better," — (because they can be!) I'll tell you why I say that: hearing dancers, no matter how good they are, don't have eyes like open doors, taking everything in. Why, it seems the deaf dancers can read what I'm thinking, just from an expression.

The whole idea is, that we should never let anyone think that dancing isn't for them just because they're deaf, or because they're boys. I find myself more and more involved with teaching dance. It's for everybody. And not just children. I want everybody to be involved in the arts.

Jacques d'Amboise
Dancer, choreographer

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Taking Part

By now you have surveyed your facilities and programs for general environmental and communication accessibility using *Getting There* and *Being There* as guides. *Taking Part* includes discussions of each of the five arts areas and examines those activities which may require special attention to become accessible. It will show you *how* to look at your arts programs and facilities so that you can identify the barriers and find solutions.

You do not need to read all of the five sections on the Visual Arts, Performing Arts, Literary Arts, Media Arts, and Design Arts. **Read the section that best applies to your program.** You will be referred to related information in other areas as necessary.

An Example

Your science museum has an interactive display in which the participant turns a crank to operate a machine which produces a picture on a television screen accompanied by an audio description of the action of the machine. To determine the accessibility of this display, you will need to understand how the components of the display relate to the environmental and communication requirements presented throughout Chapter 2. The following are examples of questions you might ask in assessing the accessibility of this display. The references tell you where to find information on the topic.

- If you are in a wheelchair, can you get close enough to the display to operate the crank? Do you need to pull up under the table or can you park alongside and reach it? (Clear Floor Space and Work Surfaces) Can short people or children or seated people reach the crank? (Reach Ranges)
- If you use crutches, is there a place to sit down near the display so you have your hands free to operate the machine? (Accessible Route) This is also helpful for elderly or weak people. If you remain standing, can you operate the machine? (Reach Ranges)
- Can you read the directions when you are either sitting or standing? (Comfortable Viewing Zone)
- If you have limited vision, can you read the directions? If you have no vision, are the directions in a form you can understand? (Communicating with Visually Impaired People)
- If you have little strength in your hands, can you operate the crank? (Controls and Hardware, Modifying Equipment)
- Can you see the display on the television screen while you operate the crank? (Comfortable Viewing Zone)
- Is there a spoken description of the material in the visual display for people who cannot see it? (Communicating with Visually Impaired People)
- Is the audio portion of the display also presented visually for hearing impaired people? (Communicating with Hearing Impaired People)

Solutions to accessibility problems can often be found by asking some general questions:

- Can you relocate an object or label that is inaccessible (out of sight, out of reach, in an inaccessible space)?
- Can you relocate the person (add a ramp, clear some aisle space, provide a chair)?
- Can you put inaccessible materials into a different form (audio tapes, large print, captions, models)?

The examples and suggestions used in this section are not hard and fast rules nor an exhaustive treatment of the possible solutions to access for each arts area. Creative thinkers can devise new and innovative methods. This section should be viewed as a guide to help you initiate that creative problem-solving process.

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Organization

In surveying an arts program for accessibility, you are concerned with both the location (the facility) and the content (the activity or product) of the program. Visual and performing arts programs are relatively consistent in their locations and activities. They may be housed in permanent facilities which are open to the public. Their activities are the design, preparation, and presentation of programs for the public. Their end products are exhibitions and performances. In the sections on visual and performing arts, we look at the relation of each disability to the location and activities of two types of arts programs.

Literary, media, and design arts programs are less well-defined in location and content. Locations may range from the room in which the poet writes, to the streets of Boston where historical tours are given, to a movie set of the Mayflower.

A location or facility can also be the end product of the program. If a city obtains a grant to plan a performing arts center in a neglected urban area, then the performing arts center with its buildings, surrounding streets, and public places become the product of the program. A building may be the place where you work, or the product of your work.

In a literary, media, or design arts program, the content might be an activity like writing poetry or planning a public garden. Sometimes the program includes not only production of the product but also presentation of it, for example, reading the poetry or showing slides of the proposed garden.

The grant recipient must understand when and how program content should be accessible to everyone. For example, if your end product is a film treatment, you do not need to provide large print and audio-tape copies of the document. If your end product is the finished film, the studio and the activity of producing that film should be accessibile to disabled filmmakers and actors. If your end product is a film festival, then the theater should be physically accessible; scripts, captioning, or interpreting for hearing impaired people may be provided; and supplementary descriptive materials for visually impaired people may be distributed. Because of the endless variety of facilities, activities, and products within the literary, media, and design arts, it is difficult to examine these areas systematically by disability type. Therefore, the organization of these sections will be by location, activity, and product.

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Special Topics

Each arts area has topics which apply particularly — but not exclusively — to it. For example, accessible dressing rooms are usually a concern of the performing arts, and lecture set up of literary arts. Information on these special topics is set off from the main text in boxes and cross-referenced in other sections. For a complete list of special topics in Chapter 2, see Where to Find It, below.

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People do not take a blind artist seriously. I wonder why they think that a sense of sight is necessary before one can have an aesthetic sense for design. The act of "Seeing" does not relate directly to an appreciation of harmony and beauty.

Mary Jane Owen
President's Committee
on Employment of the Handicapped
Washington, DC

All Together Now

Accessibility is a joint educational process: not only do museums need to learn from disabled consumers, but consumers also need to use museums and learn from them. Until disabled people, for example, understand the complex demands that conservation makes on levels of illumination, the value of blind consumers' advice to museums vis-a-vis exhibition lighting will be minimal. Until deaf consumers take advantage of sign interpretation programs, and frequent them, such programs will remain nothing more than tokens. Until each half of the educational partnership realizes its role, accessibility will not be made easier for museums and will not materialize for consumers.

Charles K. Steiner
Museums and The Disabled
The Metropolitain Museum of Art
New York, NY

Visual Arts

Introduction

The material in this section is *supplementary* to the general accessibility information in *Getting There* and *Being There*. Do not try to evaluate your program using this section alone. If you have not already done so, please read the introduction to Chapter 2 which explains how to use the chapter.

This section on visual arts is organized by disability type and focuses on the relationship of the person to the environment or program. Special topics in this section include viewing zones, displays, equipment modification, and evaluating special programs. For a list of all the special topics in Chapter 2, see Where to Find It, p. 58.

Mobility Impaired People

Ways to assess a visual arts facility from the point of view of a mobility impaired person include taking a tour in a wheelchair or with someone who uses a wheelchair. Take someone with you who uses crutches — you'll find some of the problems are different. Remember to do your assessment as participants *and* as staff. In addition to the general accessibility issues covered in *Getting There*, you will need to think about the following questions.

- How easily can you move around? Can you move about the building and among exhibits with ease? Can you turn around? Can you pull up next to display cases or table-mounted activities? Can you locate accessible rest rooms? elevators? If you have trouble moving about:
  - Can furniture be moved to make a wider aisle?
  - Can doors be removed to widen an opening?
  - Can displays be relocated so that a clear floor space is available along one side?
  - Can ramps be added at small changes in level?

As you identify obstacles and barriers that need changing, you may need to refer to the design information in *Getting There*.

- Can you see everything? Are wall-hung displays low enough to be within the comfortable viewing zone? Can you read signs and labels from a seated position? Can you see into display cases and read labels? Can a standing person see everything? If you can't see something:
  - Can the display be raised or lowered or tilted?
  - Can the floor next to the display be raised (or lowered)?
  - Can signs and labels be relocated?
  - Can you add other signs?
  - Can the lighting be improved?
  - Can glass panels or "windows" be added?

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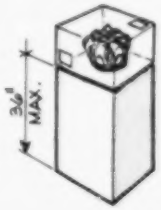
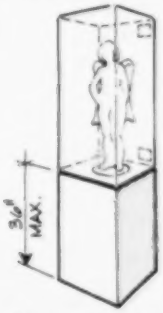
For more information, see Comfortable Viewing Zone, p. 63, and Display Cases, below.

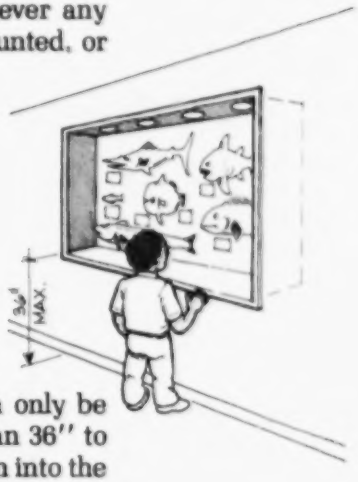
Display Cases

Display cases should allow short or seated people to see the contents and the labels.

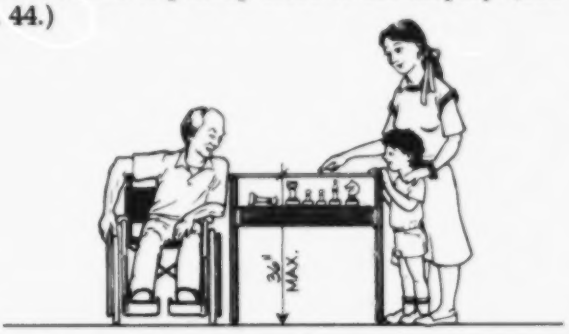
If the sides of the case are transparent, the *bottom* of the case may be mounted as high as 36" above the floor, but never any higher. Cases with transparent sides are usually wall-mounted, or free-standing on a solid base.







Floor-mounted cases often have solid sides and can only be viewed from the top. These cases should be no higher than 36" to the *top* of the case so short and seated people can see down into the case. It is more important that the top of the case not exceed 36" than that wheelchair clearance be provided underneath. However, all display cases must have enough clear floor space beside them for people in wheelchairs to pull up close to the display. (See Clear Floor Space, p. 44.)



Labels should *never* be flat on the bottom of cases. Labels can be mounted vertically on the back wall or the outside of the case; two labels at different heights may be needed if the case is very large. (See Comfortable Viewing Zone, p. 63.) For low, glass top cases, one label may be mounted flat on the top for standing people who are viewing the contents from above, and one label may be mounted on the vertical surface of the display.

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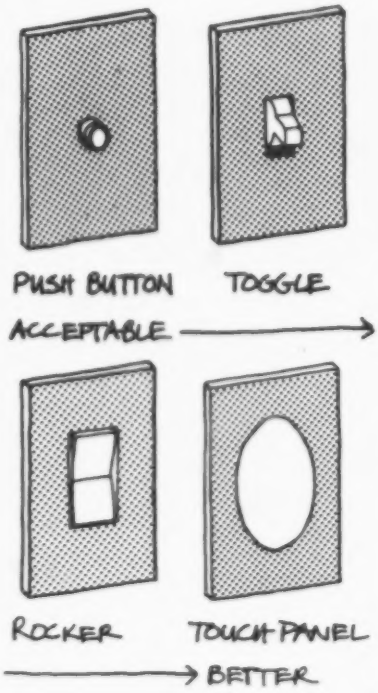
• Can you operate everything? If a display requires operating a control to work it, can you reach the control and can you operate it? with a closed fist? If you find equipment and controls you cannot operate, you may refer to Equipment Modification, below.

Equipment Modification

A variety of equipment may need modification for use by disabled people. It is impossible to anticipate all the types of equipment being used in arts programs or to discuss specific modifications. The following are general suggestions for improving equipment accessibility. (See also Reach Ranges, and Controls and Hardware, p. 45.)



• Sometimes an entire piece of equipment or a whole display can be moved (raised or lowered) to be within reach. Raising a table or adding a platform may help, but don't block the clear floor space. A shallow ramp next to a display has the same effect as "lowering" it, but it must not prevent others from getting close to the exhibit or be a hazard to blind people.

• Controls or switches which are out of reach can be relocated. However, it may cost less and look better to add a second switch.

• Some switches are hard to use. Small push buttons, for example, may be difficult for people with spasticity to find and press. Toggle switches may be better than small push buttons. Paddle type rocker switches having a large moving surface are better than toggles, and electronic touch sensitive switches are best because they require no movement or pressure to operate but people must be able to reach them.

• Some types of equipment may have mechanical devices that have to be manipulated such as levers, wheels, cranks, etc. Sometimes these can be changed to be electrically operated using only a switch and sometimes it may be possible to add an extension onto these controls to make them easier to reach, grasp, and move.

Two types of people may be able to help you with equipment problems — occupational therapists and rehabilitation engineers. The occupational therapists will know about standard products that are available to assist in making modifications.

Rehabilitation engineers specialize in making modifications to equipment so disabled people can operate it and should be able to solve any problems. They are almost always connected with rehabilitation centers or hospitals.

• Can you teach or attend classes or other special events? (See Special Programs, p. 65).

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Visually Impaired People

Ask visually impaired people to help you survey your visual arts facility and programs. You may need to refer to *Getting There* as well as Communicating with Visually Impaired People (p. 51) for more details.

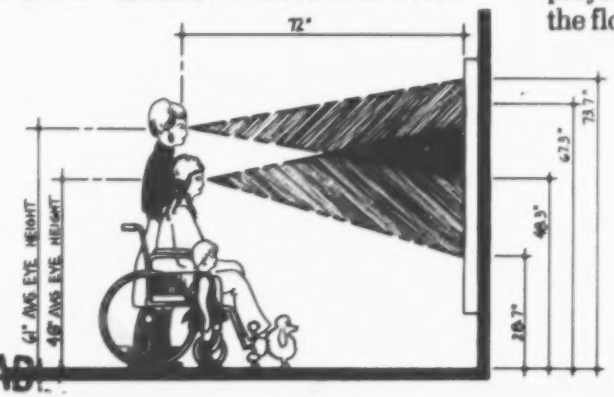
- Can you find out what's in the building? What kinds of maps of your facilities are provided? thermoform? large tactile wall map? large print? audio cassette describing building layout? Are staff available for building tours?
- Can you find your way to specific exhibits? Are directions easy to follow? Are corridors color coded? Are routes well-lighted and safe? Are directional and informational signs large and clear? Do exhibit cases block circulation routes? Do wall-hung objects protrude dangerously into corridors?
- How available are the visual components of an exhibit to a person with little or no vision? Every exhibit will have two visual components: the object itself — for example, a painting or a skeleton — and a label or description of the object. All descriptive material can be made available in two ways:
  - For people with limited vision, written material should be presented in large, clear type, with contrasting colors, on a non-glare surface, and with good lighting. Very long descriptions could be condensed and printed in large print as supplementary material. For mounting heights, see Comfortable Viewing Zone, below.

Comfortable Viewing Zone

For both standing and seated people, there is a comfortable viewing zone of 19″ within which text can be displayed if printed in large type. This comfortable viewing zone is between 48″ and 67″ above the floor. 54″ to center is a good height for mounting signs and labels on the wall.

5/8″-high letters can be read comfortably by sighted people at a distance of more than 6 feet.

Smaller type sizes customarily used in exhibition displays can be read at a distance of 4 feet if printed in maximum contrast. The visual zone reduces to 8-1/3″ when displayed between 52″ and 60″ from the floor. (See also Signage, p. 44.)



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Suggestions from the Boston Children's Museum

Try to include tactile components in your exhibits. Expendable original fragments, objects that would normally be used in loan exhibits or teaching collections, contemporary but real artifacts (for example, pieces of hand-woven cloth), or blatant reproductions and models can add immensely to the visit. These items can be made available to everyone by building them into an exhibit, or they can be included in a kit that museum staff use for special programs.

Work with the curatorial staff to make reasonable decisions about which objects can be touched and how they can be touched. Some objects are too valuable, too fragile, or too old and irreplaceable for visitors to have tactile or perhaps even visual access to them. This is an indisputable fact. However, many objects can take limited, gentle, supervised handling by visually impaired visitors. Some of these objects may need to be protected from oil and dirt particles by having visually impaired visitors wear thin cotton gloves.

Think about participatory exhibitions as a regular feature of your museum. By this, we are not suggesting a special gallery for blind people, but rather presenting changing exhibits that have a tactile and auditory focus as well as a visual focus.

Janet Kamien
Is There Life After 504?
The Children's Museum, Boston

I call the years before 504 'The Dark Ages' when there was no sign language interpreting in museums or theaters.

Deborah Sonnenstrahl
Gallaudet College
Washington, DC

- For people with no vision, present written material in a non-visual form: on audio-tape with a portable player, or in braille, or provide a reader or guide on special tours.

When the visual material is the art or exhibition object itself, the solutions are more varied.

- Present the object in the best way possible so people with some vision can see it: make sure people can get close to it, that it is well-lighted, that non-glare materials are used.
- Provide descriptive material about the object.
- Allow objects such as sculpture, jewelry, pottery, or armor to be handled whenever possible. When originals cannot be touched, reproductions can be substituted.
- Build small scale models of large objects such as dinosaurs, ships' hulls, or tombs.

- Can you teach or attend classes or other special events? (See Special Programs, p. 65.)

Hearing Impaired People

For hearing impaired people, there will probably be few problems in using a visual arts facility provided you have good signage, volume control telephones, a TDD, and visual warning systems. (For general accessibility information, see *Getting There.*) However, providing general information about and access to the content of the program is very important. As with visual materials, you will need to identify all audible or spoken material. These will range from tours and lectures to beeping feedback on an interactive exhibit.

Whether the audio material *describes* the exhibit or program, or *is* the exhibit or program, you should be able to provide that material in visual form. Supplemental written materials, interpreters, and good sound systems are described in Communicating with Hearing Impaired People, p. 48, in More About Interpreters, p. 70, and in Lectures, p. 74.

- Is all the information that is provided about your programs available in written form or through a sign language interpreter? Can deaf visitors use the information desk? Are signed tours offered? Are self-guided audio-cassette tours available in printed form?
- Is the content of the program itself dependent on audible materials? Are lectures and classes offered with sign language interpreters? Do exhibits that make a noise have a similar visual display? Does your auditorium or lecture hall have a good sound system? an auxiliary listening system?
- Can you teach or attend classes or other special events? (See Special Programs, p. 65.)

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Learning Impaired or Mentally Retarded People

In reviewing your visual arts facility for its accessibility to learning impaired people, you will want to pay particular attention to signage. Information communication is the major issue in both architectural and program accessibility unless the people you are accommodating have other physical limitations as well.

For both facility and program accessibility, refer to the suggestions in Communicating with Learning Impaired People, p. 53.

- Is all the information about getting into and using your facility presented in clear, concise, and (preferably) pictorial form? If not:
  - Can the signs, maps, brochures, or whatever be redone in a simpler fashion?
  - Can you add signs, arrows, pictographs to make directions and locations clearer?
- In looking at your programs, you will need to assess the way the content is presented. Are written materials, directions, tours, classes, lectures, and labels presented so that learning impaired people can understand them? If not:
  - Can you present information in more than one form, that is, in speech and writing?
  - Can you improve signage?
  - Can you provide special tours or sessions which will meet the needs of particular groups?
  - Can you simplify the surroundings for these tours and classes?
  - Can you provide things for participants to handle?
  - Can you include specific activities?

All your programs and activities should be evaluated from all points of view and for all disabilities. Special Programs presents general questions which apply to any program.

Two good books on working with disabled museum visitors are *Museums and the Disabled* and *Museum Education for Retarded Adults, Reaching Out to a Neglected Audience.* Both are by Charles Steiner, Assistant Museum Educator, and are available for $1.50 each for postage and handling from:

The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Department of Community Education
Fifth Avenue at 82nd Street
New York, NY 10028.

The National Art Education Association serves as a clearinghouse on art education materials and instruction. Write:

NAEA
1916 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091
(703) 860-8000

Special Programs

Can disabled people participate in all your special programs? Can they take or conduct tours? (See Tours, p. 82.) Can they attend or teach classes? (See Lectures, p. 74.) Can they use the library? projection room? other special spaces? special equipment? At least one of everything you offer should be accessible. (See Program Accessibility, p. 4.)

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Remember that all program activities can be broken down into components involving circulation, seeing and hearing, reaching and operating, reading, or listening. You can always apply the questions:

- Can you get there?
- Can you see and hear comfortably?
- Can you be seen and be heard?
- Can you operate the equipment?
- Can you understand the materials?

Solutions generally involve moving the person to the place or activity; moving the place or activity to the person; adding, modifying, extending, or simplifying hardware and equipment, and putting materials in a different form.

Performing Arts

Introduction

The material in this section is *supplementary* to the general accessibility information in *Getting There* and *Being There*. Do not try to evaluate your program using this section alone. If you have not already done so, please read the introduction to Chapter 2 which explains how to use the chapter.

This section on the performing arts is organized by disability type and focuses on the role of the individual as a member of the audience, as a performer, or as a staff person. Special topics in this section include going on tour, fixed seating, seating locations, dressing rooms, and interpreting for performances. For a list of all the special topics in Chapter 2, see Where to Find It, p. 58.

On the Road

A performing arts company on tour should be just as accessible to audience, performers, and staff as it is at home. A touring company should maintain documentation of good faith efforts to provide an accessible performance. The company can request information from the presenter about the needs of the audience and the architectural accessibility of the facilities. A touring company may also request an assurance of compliance from the presenter before booking the performance.

Mobility Impaired People

A facility used for performing arts programs should be surveyed for accessibility to mobility impaired people. One way is to use a wheelchair or get someone who does to accompany you. Conduct the same tour with a person who walks with difficulty — for example, a person who uses crutches or a walker. As you examine your facility, remember to judge its usefulness for all the people using it — the audience, the performers, and the staff. In addition to the general accessibility issues in *Getting There*, consider the following questions:

- As a member of the audience:
  - Can you buy a ticket comfortably?
  - Can you choose from a reasonable selection of seating locations?
  - Can you get to your seats? If you identify circulation barriers, you may need to refer to the design information in *Getting There*.
  - Are parking spaces for wheelchairs level and are the sightlines good? Will the seating arrangements allow you to sit with a disabled companion? a non-disabled companion? Suggestions for improving seating arrangements are given below.

It is incredibly boring to go to the theater with a friend in a wheelchair and to be separated from my companion.

Mary Jane Owen
President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped
Washington, DC

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Fixed Seating

Fixed seating in assembly areas can usually be modified to accommodate people in wheelchairs by removing seats along the aisles or in the front or back rows. Removing one seat at front or back rows provides adequate space for one wheelchair; removing three seats will accommodate two wheelchairs.

Along the aisles, removing two seats will provide space for one wheelchair, removing six seats will provide for two wheelchairs.

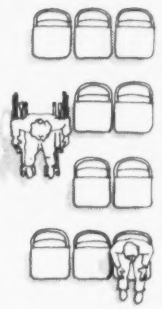
The space provided for a person in a wheelchair must be 30″ x 48″ (see Clear Floor Space, p. 44) and must be level. Since many disabled people cannot shift about in their chairs to improve their view, the sightlines should be unobstructed. It is important that seating spaces be available near the front, the back, and the middle to afford the disabled participants a range of seating options.

Some performing arts centers use folding seats in the accessible seating spaces when wheelchair visitors are not using the space. In all cases, the staff should check with local building departments and the fire marshall for rules and restrictions regarding access for physically disabled people in assembly areas.

Some lecture halls and auditoria which have stepped or narrow aisles, fixed seats, and no front or rear cross aisles cannot be used at all by disabled people who cannot climb stairs. Such performance spaces should not be used.

Flexible seating can be provided by grouping removable seats in various locations so combinations of disabled and non-disabled people can sit together. (See also Lectures, p. 74, and Seating Locations, p. 69.)

Aisle Space for One



Back Row Space

Aisle Space for Two

Front Row Space

- As a performer:
  - Can you get to the stage, dressing rooms, orchestra pit, or rehearsal rooms?
  - Is the dressing room equipped with a bench for changing and a work surface with knee-space? Suggestions for an accessible dressing room are given below.

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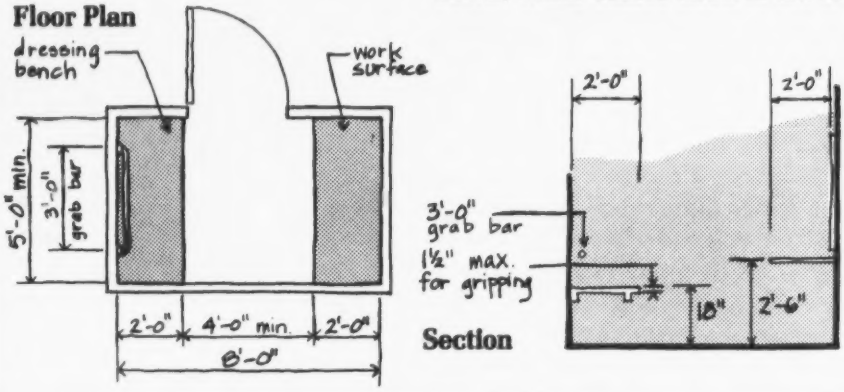
Accessible Dressing Room

Many people who use wheelchairs change their clothes lying down, while others need to sit. A low, padded bench at least 2 feet by 5 feet and mounted about 18″ above the floor would provide a good place for changing. The bench should be open underneath to provide toe space and should have a grab bar along the back wall.

A work surface with a knee-space 2 feet deep and 30″ high should be provided. The clear floor space in the dressing room should be at least 4 feet by 5 feet. (See also Reach Ranges, p. 45, and Clear Floor Space and Work Surfaces, p. 44.)



- As a staff person:
  - Can you get to the administrative offices, box office, projection booth, lighting panel, wardrobe, or scenery storage?
  - Can you reach and use the equipment there? (See Equipment Modification, p. 62.)
- Are classes and other special events offered in accessible spaces? At least one of everything you offer should be accessible. (See Special Programs, p. 65.)

Visually Impaired People

Ask visually impaired people to help you survey your performing arts facility and programs. You may need to refer to *Getting There* as well as Communicating with Visually Impaired People, p. 51, for more details.

- As a member of the audience:
  - Does the box office have a large, clear seating plan?
  - How easily can you move about the building? Is the lobby well-lighted? Are corridors free of obstacles? Are directions to seating locations large and readable.
  - Can you choose from a reasonable selection of seats? For suggestions on seat location, see Seating Locations, below.

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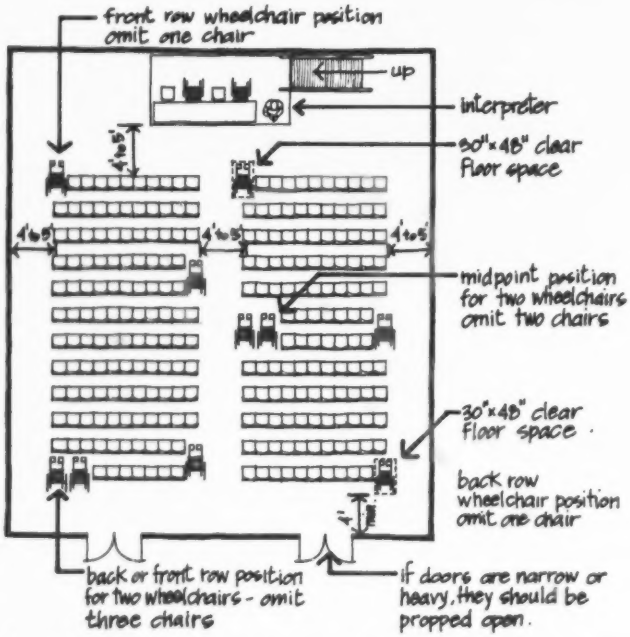
Seating Locations

Visually impaired people usually want seats near the front where visibility is best for those who have some sight. These seats usually have the best sound and are good for those who depend entirely on what they hear. Some visually impaired people will use guide dogs for mobility. (See Guide Dogs, p. 92.) The dogs must stay with their owners at all times. For this reason, front rows, back rows, and aisle seats are good locations which provide space for a dog. When these locations are not available, an empty adjacent seat provides extra floor space for the dog. Visually impaired people should not be required to sit in any one location.



Most hearing impaired people need to sit where the sound quality is best if they have any hearing, and where they can see well if they depend on interpreters or lip-reading. When interpreters are provided, hearing impaired people should be able to sit directly in front of the interpreter's position, but they should not be required to sit there if they prefer not to. (See also Fixed Seating, p. 67, and Lectures, p. 74.)

- Are programs available in large print, braille, or verbal form? Is additional explanatory material provided? People who can see little or not at all may want descriptions of the visual elements of a performance. Such descriptions can be presented on audio tape, or in braille and in large print program notes, or by a staff person or volunteer trained to provide commentary on sets, actions, costumes, or expressions, before or during the performance. Some theaters are using infrared listening devices (see Auxiliary Listening Systems, p. 50) to provide pre-show commentaries and program notes. Let people know what services you provide and which supplementary materials are available in advance.

  On the other hand, don't assume a blind person will want a lot of visual information. Some people do not want elaborate descriptions of how things "look", preferring to rely on their other senses.
- Are supplementary activities provided? You may want to offer visually impaired members of the audience an opportunity to examine stage sets, costumes, performance areas, musical instruments, or whatever prior to a performance.

Space for Dance, an architectural design guide, is available for $14.50 from:

The Publishing Center for Cultural Resources
625 Broadway
New York, NY 10012

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- As a performer or staff person:
  - Are all circulation routes to dressing rooms, orchestra pit, stages, or rehearsal rooms, well-lighted, and free of obstacles?
  - Can scripts, stage diagrams, directions, or schedules be made available in some other usable form?
  - Can the materials for classes and special events be provided in both large print and non-visual form?
- Can you attend or teach classes or conduct other special events or programs? At least one performance, event, tour, session, etc. of everything you offer should be available to visually impaired people. (See Special Programs, p. 65.)
  - Can you operate any equipment necessary to do your job? Are directions clear?

For information about interpreter specialists,

Department of Interpreter/
Transliterator Instruction
Gallaudet College
800 Florida Avenue NE
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 651-5631

Hearing Impaired People

In the performing arts, providing access to the content of your program to hearing impaired people is very important. You will need to identify all audible or spoken material and provide alternative methods of presentation. Be sure to review Communicating with Hearing Impaired People, p. 48.

- As a member of the audience
  - Can you call the box office on a TDD?
  - Are seats for hearing impaired people provided near the front? (See Seating Locations, p. 69.)
  - Do you have an auxiliary listening system?
  - Do you provide interpreters for at least one performance of every production? If so, can you see the interpreter *and* the performance at the same time? (See More About Interpreters, below.)

On Shadow Interpretation

If I were Rosalind, this (the interpreter) would also be Rosalind. She would be dressed in navy blue to make signs more visible, but she would also wear some piece of costume or maybe even an entire costume which identifies her with that role. Shadowing adds an added dimension to the show because it's like having... an alter ego. Hearing audiences that have come to see an interpreted show are always very plesantly surprised because it adds a depth and dimension to the performances that even they did not realize existed.

Sonia Robinson
Stage Hands
Atlanta, Georgia

More About Interpreters

The placement of interpreters for theatrical performances is often a problem. In the past, theaters experimented with sign language interpreters spotlighted on or near the stage. This proved unsatisfactory for the deaf audience because of the "ping pong" effect in which the focal point of the deaf person alternated between the interpreter and the action on stage.

New techniques help solve the problem. Some playwrights, for example, are integrating deaf characters who quite naturally interpret the actions on stage. "Shadowing" is another interpreting technique in which each speaking actor is accompanied by a signing interpreter who follows the actor around. Tulsa Opera Company in Oklahoma strategically places interpreters within the field of vision just below but in front of the stage level field. Consequently, deaf visitors seated in the orchestra sections can view the action on stage yet see the interpreter at the bottom of the visual field. A few interpreters specialize in music interpretation for deaf audiences. For more information, see Interpreters, p. 48, and Lectures, p. 74.)

- Are supplementary printed materials such as scripts or librettos provided? Audiences report that a short synopsis of the performance in program notes would help considerably. Some theaters make scripts available in advance to deaf people. Be sure to publicize the availability of supplementary materials.
- Are any seats for hearing impaired people equipped with lights? Some theaters install small lights at selected seats so that a deaf visitor can follow a script during the performance. These lighted seats are best located near the stage.

• Are materials for classes and special events presented in usable form? At least one performance, event, session, or tour you offer should be available to hearing impaired people. (See Special Programs, p. 65.)

- As a performer or staff person:
  - Are TDD's provided?
  - Can you teach classes or conduct tours or other special events? (See Special Programs, p. 65.)
  - Can you operate any equipment necessary to do your job? Can audible signals be replaced by visual signals?

Learning Impaired or Mentally Retarded People

In reviewing your performing arts facility for its accessibility to learning impaired or mentally retarded people, you will want to pay particular attention to signage. Information communication is the issue in both architectural and program accessibility unless the people you are accommodating have other physical limitations as well. In looking at your programs, you will need to assess the way the content is presented.

For both facility and program accessibility, refer to the suggestions in Communicating with Learning Impaired People, p. 53.

- As a member of the audience:
  - Are special programs provided which would enhance enjoyment and understanding of the performance?
  - Are special performances modified to meet the needs of the audience?
- As a performer or staff person:
  - Are materials presented in clear, understandable form?

• Are special events or classes offered in forms suitable to learning impaired or mentally retarded people? (See Special Programs, p. 65.)

Here at the NY City Opera, we believe that program accessibility is an important challenge. In seasons past, we have confronted this issue by providing talking synopses and braille libretti for blind people; detailed synopses and the Infrared Listening System for hearing-impaired people. For the first time in New York, two sign language interpreters were positioned on stage with signers in a regular performance to simultaneously translate the opera for the deaf. The response from both the hearing and non-hearing audience was so tremendous that we now plan to continue these efforts on behalf of hearing-impaired people.

I strongly encourage all arts institutions to join us in our commitment to open the doors to this vast new audience. We welcome handicapped people and invite them to share a barrier free future in the exciting world of the arts.

Beverly Sills, General Director
New York City Opera

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Literary Arts

Introduction

The material in this section is *supplementary* to the general accessibility information in *Getting There* and *Being There*. Do not try to evaluate your program using this section alone. If you have not already done so, please read the introduction to Chapter 2 which explains how to use the chapter.

Literary arts programs support the creation, publication, promotion, distribution, and presentation of literature. In addition, they may involve graphic arts production, printing, readings, workshops, exhibits, and book fairs, as well as writing, translation, and editing. These activities may take place in a variety of locations ranging from printing shops to classrooms to shopping malls.

This section on the literary arts is organized by location, activities, and products, and frequently refers to materials in *Getting There* (architectural accessibility), *Being There* (communication techniques), and *Taking Part* (other arts areas). For example, when the activities of a literary arts program include exhibitions, performances, or lectures, the visual arts, performing arts, and media arts sections should be consulted. The special topic addressed in this section is lecture set up. For a list of all the special topics in Chapter 2, see Where to Find It, p. 58.

Location

- Where do you work? Grant recipients in the literary arts will be mostly concerned with facility accessibility in terms of where they work. For a writer, editor, translator, or publisher, the question will be, can a disabled person use the facility where the work is conducted? To answer this question, you will need to survey your facility using *Getting There* as your guide.
- Where do you present your work? If your activities include readings or lectures, you can refer to Performing Arts, p. 66, for more information. However, these events are often presented in ordinary rooms or halls without fixed seating and without stages. The material on Lectures, p. 74, is a guide to setting up in the typical church hall, school gymnasium, art gallery, or class room. Remember that all the general architectural accessibility requirements in *Getting There* apply as well.

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Activities

- What accommodations need to be made to allow a disabled person to do his or her job? Although the work place may be architecturally accessible, much depends on how well people can use the equipment, and the adequacy of the communication between a disabled person and other people. Equipment modification can be very specialized depending on the type of equipment or type of disability. For basic information see Controls and Hardware, p. 45, and Equipment Modification, p. 62. Communications equipment and supplementary materials for hearing, visually, or learning impaired people are presented in *Being There*. You should work closely with the disabled people whose needs you are trying to meet.
- Do you present exhibitions? If, for example, your library displays rare books in a glass case in your lobby, or has a changing exhibit on a different author each month, or hangs posters of the works of famous illustrators, you should study the section on visual arts for advice on making your exhibitions accessible.
- Can disabled people attend or teach classes or conduct other special events or programs? (See Special Programs, p. 65.)

Products

- Do you provide or distribute literary material? If so, these materials should be available to visually impaired people if requested. See Communicating with Visually Impaired People, p. 51, for information on alternatives to printed materials.

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Lectures

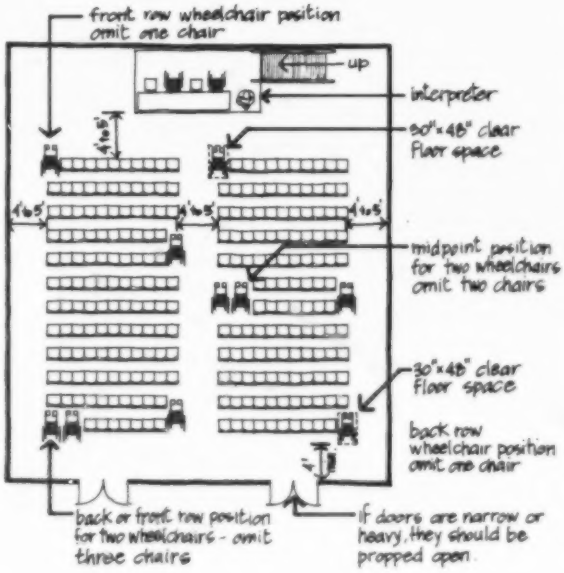
The Audience. Typical theater or auditorium seating is described in Fixed Seating, p. 67, but if you are making your own seating arrangements, the Typical Seating Plan illustration is a good guide.

Rooms having fixed seats and/or tables can also be used by disabled people provided there is a flat floor and adequate space at front, rear, or side aisles for wheelchairs.

For hearing impaired people an interpreter should be provided and, if possible, the text of the presentation. For a play or poetry reading, you might provide the full text. For a lecture, brief printed notes may be more suitable. The interpreter should be well-lighted and must be positioned near the speaker in front of a plain dark backdrop. (See also Interpreters, p. 48, and More About Interpreters, p. 70.)

For visually impaired people, a description of any decorations, props, backdrops, characters, and costumes should be provided for those who want it. (See also Seating Locations, p. 69.)

Typical Seating Plan


front row wheelchair position omit one chair
up
interpreter
30"×48" clear floor space
4'×5'
4'×5'
4'×5'
4'×5'
midpoint position for two wheelchairs omit two chairs
30"×48" clear floor space
back row wheelchair position omit one chair
back or front row position for two wheelchairs - omit three chairs
if doors are narrow or heavy, they should be propped open

Microphone on Blocks

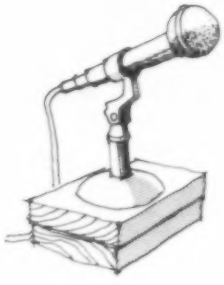
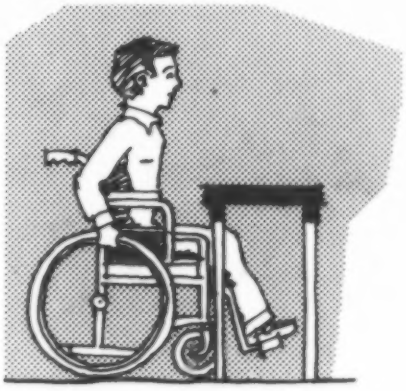


Table Clearance



Floor Mike with Boom

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The Speaker. Standard lecterns cannot be used by mobility impaired people, and are also unsuitable for deaf speakers who are using sign language. For disabled speakers, provide a raised platform with a ramp (if you don't have a stage) and a speakers' table with suitable microphones. If the speaker has a mobility impairment, be sure that he or she can get on the speakers' platform unassisted and that the table has adequate clearance for a wheelchair.

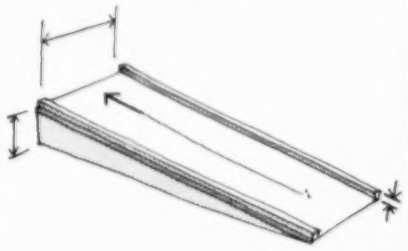
Table microphones or lapel mikes are the best for disabled people. Since some disabled speakers may not be able to lean over the table mike, it might be necessary to raise one by placing it on wood blocks. An effective alternative mike for seated disabled people is a mike stand with a horizontal boom.

The Speakers' Platform illustration shows a typical set-up for several speakers. A platform measuring 8' x 16' with a 30" wide speakers' table is an adequate size to allow maneuvering space for people in wheelchairs and space for the interpreter. If possible, the platform should be placed against a wall to eliminate one edge where speakers might fall off.

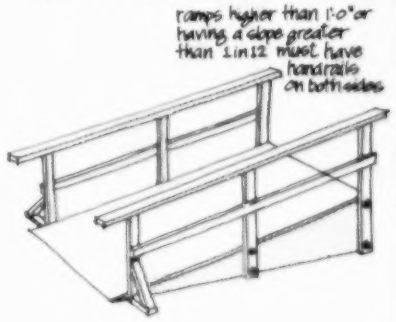
In selecting platform height, consideration should be given to the size of the room and the space required for a ramp to allow disabled speakers or participants to get onto the platform. The ramp should be no steeper than 1:12 (that is, 1" rise for each 12" of length). Steeper ramps can be hazardous or impossible for some people to use unassisted. In places where a 1:12 ramp slope is impossible, slightly steeper ramps (never steeper than 1:10) might be used provided they are equipped with handrails and assistance is always available for those who cannot use them safely and independently.

If the speaker is hearing impaired, you may need to provide reverse interpreting in which the speaker signs and the interpreter speaks. If the speaker is visually impaired, be sure he/she can move safely about the stage or podium. Find out if the speaker wants assistance in calling on people during a discussion.

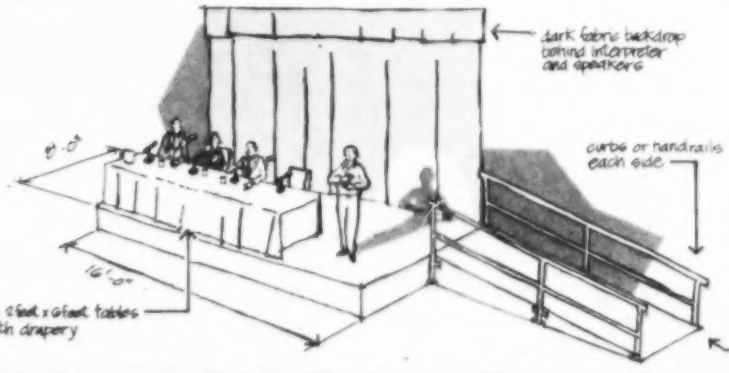
Ramp for Rise up to 12"

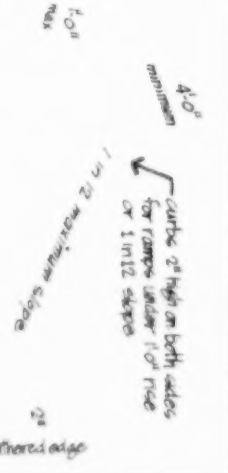


Ramp for Rise over 12"



Speakers' Platform


dark fabric backdrop behind interpreter and speakers
curbs or handrails each side
8'-0"
16'-0"
2 - 2 feet x 6 feet tables with drapery
south (adhered edge



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Because the motion picture and television industry has a powerful impact on the shaping of public opinion, many feel it also has a responsibility to portray persons with disabilities accurately and sensitively. The media has an unchallenged ability to break down invisible barriers, altering those attitudes that can be the most formidable obstacles to disabled persons' profitable interactions with and contributions to society. One of the ways this can be achieved is by incorporating disabled persons into regular program formats — on the street, in grocery stores, brushing their teeth, teaching school — in ways we encounter these people in daily life.

Karen Littman
Handicapped Information Service
Boulder, Colorado

Media Arts: Film/Radio/Television

Introduction

The material in this section is *supplementary* to the general accessibility information in *Getting There* and *Being There*. Do not try to evaluate your program using this section alone. If you have not already done so, please read the introduction to Chapter 2 which explains how to use the chapter.

Media arts programs involve many different activities in the production, distribution, exhibition, or broadcast of films, video programs, and radio programs. In addition, they may present workshops, conferences, seminars, and lectures, as well as support research, newsletters, and residencies or working space for independent artists.

This section on the media arts is organized by location, activities, and products, and frequently refers to materials in *Getting There* (architectural accessibility), *Being There* (communication techniques), and *Taking Part* (other arts areas). Since no specific facility type, like a theater or museum, is common to all activities, the discussion of accessible location is very general. When the activities of a media arts program include exhibitions, performances, or lectures, the visual arts, performing arts, and literary arts sections should be consulted. The special topic addressed in this section is about using the arts to change attitudes about disabled people. For a list of all the special topics in Chapter 2, see Where to Find It, p. 58.

Location

- Where do you work? Your studio, workshop, administrative offices, or theater should be accessible to disabled employees and the visiting public. The information in *Getting There* can guide you in assessing your place of work.
- Where do you present your work? If the place where you present your work is different from the place where you produce it, then that place should also be accessible. If you use a visual arts or performing arts facility (a gallery or a theater), you can refer to the section on those programs or suggestions, as well as to the architectural accessibility information in *Getting There*.
- Do you work in facilities and locations that are not connected with your program? Filmmakers, video producers, and radio producers often "go on location," and there's no guaranteeing the location is going to be "accessible." This problem is most severe for the mobility impaired person who needs to: 1) get to the job, and 2) have a usable rest room. One solution for the disabled media artist or actor or actress is to take an "accessible location" with them. A van equipped with a lift and a chemical toilet can provide mobility and flexibility for a disabled person. For long-term projects where

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housing is provided for actors and crew, two solutions are possible. A hotel may provide accessible rooms, or accessible mobile homes (which are commercially available) could be used as offices and, of course, are portable and can be moved from site to site.

Activities

- What accommodations need to be made to allow a disabled person to do his or her job? Although the work place may be architecturally accessible, much depends on how well people can use the equipment, and the adequacy of the communication between a disabled person and other people. Equipment modification can be very specialized depending on the type of equipment or type of disability. For basic information see Controls and Hardware, p. 45, and Equipment Modification, p. 62. Communications equipment and supplementary materials for hearing, visually, or learning impaired people are presented in *Being There*. You should work closely with the disabled people whose needs you are trying to meet.
- Do you present exhibitions? For example, if your media arts center displays posters or movie stills with descriptive labels, or exhibits a collection of antique movie cameras, you should study the section on visual arts for advice on making your exhibitions accessible.
- Do you show films or make other audio/visual presentations? If so, is the hall or theater accessible? For more information see Performing Arts, p. 66, and Lectures, p. 74.
- Can disabled people attend or teach classes or conduct other special events or programs? (See Special Programs, p. 65.)
- Do you sponsor tours? If so, see Tours, p. 82.

Because the media arts often reach very large audiences, they are a particularly powerful tool. "Through exhibition and broadcast, the media artist conveys ideas and values that would not otherwise be put into wide circulation," (National Endowment for the Arts, *Media Arts Application Guidelines)*. It is certainly the purpose of the Arts Endowment's 504 Regulations to make the "ideas and values" of all the arts available *to* disabled people, and to increase the participation *of* disabled people as artists. It seems appropriate to consider also the message the arts deliver *about* disabled people. The arts can enhance the public's image and understanding of disabled people and consequently remove the most subtle and invisible barrier of all — negative attitudes.

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Attitudes

Including disabled people in artistic productions can change attitudes. Persistent casting of disabled people in "everyday" roles — roles focussing not on the disability but on the person — can expand the public image of "normal" disabled people. In addition, as professionals working in the arts, disabled actors or actresses increase public awareness of disabled people as ordinary members of society who work for a living at interesting and creative jobs.

Why do you always have to use our condition as reason for inspiration? I don't always want to be inspiring. I just want to be me and accepted like everyone else. Whether I am liked or disliked should be based on who I am as a person, not who I am as a physical entity. I want to be hated on camera as well. I want people to loathe the disability sometimes. I want to play murderers, kidnappers, or whatever. There are disabled people out there who are crazy, unsympathetic people, who are nasty, vicious and mean. If you are going to show us as equals, then you'll have to make room for all those situations. I would like to play roles that are written regardless of disability. That's my ultimate goal, to eliminate the necessity to even mention disability.

Alan Toy
Actor

For a deaf student... a degree in theater was just never heard of. So I studied library science and spent most of my time in the theater. There was no degree offered in theater because there were no career opportunities in theater for the deaf at that time... Before the establishment of the National Theater of the Deaf, most roles of deaf people in theater were played by hearing people who gave a false image of the deaf people themselves.

Phyllis Frelich
Actress

Products

- Can a disabled person participate in and enjoy the presentations of films, videotapes, or other audio/visual materials?
- Are films accessible to hearing impaired people? Is an auxiliary listening system provided? Is the film captioned? If not, you can provide an interpreter or written program notes to accompany the film. The latter should be made available *before* the screening, and small lights located at some seats for those using program notes.

Program notes for hearing impaired people could provide the script (if it's short) or a condensed version of the dialogue or narrative which can be followed during the presentation. A short synopsis of the action is often helpful to a person with limited hearing.

- Are films accessible to visually impaired people? A verbal description of the settings, scenes, and actions of the film should be available *before* the screening. These should be in large print as well as in audible form, such as audio tape.

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Program notes for visually impaired people should describe the major visual features and actions of the production including sets and costumes. An accompanying commentary can describe expressions and actions particularly where the dialogue or narrative are insufficient. These program notes may be presented on audio tape, in braille or large print, or by a reader.

- Are videotapes produced in captioned or closed captioned versions? (See Captioning, p. 50.) Separate program notes for hearing and visually impaired audiences may be provided depending on the method of distribution.
- Are other audio/visual presentations, such as slides and film strips, available in titled versions? Separate program notes for hearing or visually impaired audiences may be distributed with the audio/visual materials.

For more information on the production and content of program notes for visually or hearing impaired people, see the sections on communication techniques in *Being There*, and Performing Arts, p. 66.

Because hearing loss restricts the linguistic input deaf children receive, they typically function in an environment that is impoverished by comparison with their normally hearing peers... If hearing impaired children are to succeed in society's mainstream, they must be bombarded with visual language. Closed captioned television today provides visual language input in a sufficient quantity and in a form sufficiently attractive to represent a significant attack on the historic communication problems of hearing impaired people.

Jane Norman
National Captioning Insitute
Falls Church, Virginia

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Mr. Itzhak Perlman insists that disabled people deserve an accessible environment "because we are part of society and society is incomplete without us..." It is clear that the great efforts of the '70s to get accessibility legislation, codes and standards in place are not producing the expected results. We now have a level of public awareness, widespread knowledge of barriers, and such technical resources as the new uniform design standards. We have the tools. Let's do what this distinguished American asks and finish the job.

Edward H. Noakes, FAIA
Noakes Associates Architects
Washington, DC

Design Arts

Introduction

The material in this section is *supplementary* to the general accessibility information in *Getting There* and *Being There*. Do not try to evaluate your program using this section alone. If you have not already done so, please read the introduction to Chapter 2 which explains how to use the chapter.

In general, design arts programs may include design services, projects, and research in the areas of architecture, landscape architecture, urban planning, and interior, industrial, graphic, or fashion design. In addition, design communications may include exhibitions, films, slide shows, lectures, or other communications about design issues or events.

These activities can be made available to everyone. If your program sponsors a public event — for example, a fashion show, an exhibition of graphic arts or industrial design products — then both the content and participation in the event must be accessible. If your organization plans a new urban park or an audio-visual display on the history of an old fort, then the park or the display should be designed so that disabled people can use and experience them.

In some cases, the kind and degree of accessibility are defined by law. When design arts programs involve designing or modifying a building, that building must be planned to be accessible to disabled people. All architectural, landscape, urban, and interior design projects must be architecturally accessible in accordance with federal and local laws.

This section on the design arts is organized by location, activities, and products, and frequently refers to materials in *Getting There* (architectural accessibility), *Being There* (communication techniques), and *Taking Part* (other arts areas). The special topic addressed in this section is planning and conducting tours. For a list of all the special topics in Chapter 2, see Where to Find It, p. 58.

Location

- Where do you work? Your studio, workshop, or administrative offices should be accessible to disabled employees and the visiting public. The information in *Getting There* can guide you in assessing your place of work.
- Where do you present your work? If the place where you present your work is different from the place where you produce it, the presentation place should also be accessible. If you use a visual arts or performing arts facility (a gallery or a theater), refer to the sections on these programs for suggestions as well as to *Getting There*.

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Activities

- What accommodations need to be made to allow a disabled person to do his or her job? Although the work place may be architecturally accessible, much depends on whether disabled people can use the equipment, and the adequacy of the communication between a disabled person and other people. Equipment modification can be very specialized depending on the type of equipment or type of disability. For basic information see Controls and Hardware, p. 45, and Equipment Modification, p. 62. Communications equipment and supplementary materials for hearing, visually, or learning impaired people are presented in *Being There*. You should work closely with the disabled people whose needs you are trying to meet.
- Do you present design exhibitions? Does your organization want to display a model of a new civic center, or have a changing exhibit which features a different graphic artist each month, or sponsor a show on energy conservation techniques? If so, you should study the section on the visual arts for advice on making your exhibitions accessible.
- Do you sponsor presentations? When program activities include lectures, slide shows, or workshops, for example, the sections on the literary arts or media arts should be consulted.
- Can disabled people attend or teach classes or conduct other special events or programs? (See Special Programs, p. 65.)
- Do you conduct tours? If you offer a tour as a regular feature of your program, it does not need to be accessible every time. For example, a regular Saturday tour might provide an interpreter once a month. (See Program Accessibility. p. 4, and Tours, p. 82.)

Products

- Do you design, produce, or distribute graphic arts materials? If so, these materials should be available to visually impaired people if requested. See Literary Arts. p. 72, and Communicating with Visually Impaired People, p. 51, for information on alternatives to printed materials.
- Do you produce films, slide shows, or other audio/visual materials? If so, you should refer to the section on Media Arts, p. 76, for information on making them accessible to visually and hearing impaired people.
- Do you design buildings and facilities? If so, you must comply with all applicable building codes and standards (federal, state, and local) in planning for accessibility. Many of the suggestions in this book are applications of architectural design standards to problems related to the arts.

Gardens, parks, plazas, and other exterior spaces present some design problems not covered by many building codes. The principle of an accessible route applies to exterior spaces. Make

An excellent book on exterior spaces is *Barrier Free Site Design* available for $8.00 from:

HUD User
P.O. Box 280
Germantown, MD 20874
Order No. HUD 0050024

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sure that the circulation space is free from hazards: protruding objects, debris that might cause people to stumble, unexpected dropoffs, standing water or icy patches. Night time lighting, clear signage, resting places, and access to parking and public transportation are other important site considerations.

Tours

In general, the items included in the tour should be available to everyone one way or another — through written or verbal descriptions, pictures, talks, pamphlets, or slides. But you do not need to do all of these things all of the time. You can always schedule "free time" on the tour for people to explore places that may not be included in the tour.

Mobility Impaired People. The route of a tour should meet all the requirements for an accessible route. A person in a wheelchair should be able to get in and out of buildings and along the route without encountering steps, curbs, turnstiles, or narrow doors. Steep hills, rough terrain, and long slopes may be very tiring for some people who may need help or extra time to rest. For older people and people who walk with difficulty or tire easily, be sure your route includes places to sit and rest. You might provide wheelchairs for people who cannot walk very far. If you can, design a flexible route so those who cannot complete the whole tour can easily return to start, or can rest along the way while others do a segment of the route and return.

Visually Impaired People. Visually impaired people will want additional descriptive materials about the items on the tour. These should be available ahead of time. A tactile map of the route or models of the things on the tour might be helpful. The kinds of supplementary materials you choose to provide will depend on the subject of the tour.

Be sure the tour route is free from hazards for blind people, especially protruding objects (p. 33).

Be aware of features that are tactually interesting: old brick walls, shrubs and flowers, or sculptures. Tour guides should give additional descriptions of what things look like for groups that include visually impaired people. See Communicating with Visually Impaired People, p. 51, for more information.

Hearing Impaired People. When interpreters are provided on a tour, the speaker needs to use simple, direct language and avoid specialized or technical terms. Speakers must also understand that deaf participants need time to look at the object *after* the interpreter has finished the verbal presentation. Printed tour notes may be helpful and should be available ahead of time. For more information, see Communicating with Hearing Impaired People, p. 48, More About Interpreters, p. 70. and Lectures, p. 74.

Learning Impaired or Mentally Retarded People. You may want to modify the content of your tours for learning impaired or mentally retarded people. Long distances, too many items, or too much information may be inappropriate. The suggestions for simple language, flexibility, and pictorial information in Communicating with Learning Impaired or Mentally Retarded People, p. 53, apply to tours.

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Meetings and Panels

Many arts organizations conduct meetings and panels. To make these accessible to disabled people, attention must be paid to the architectural accessibility of the facility, the communication techniques available for presenting meeting materials and content, and any other special needs of disabled participants and visitors.

The following sections of this book will be helpful in planning a meeting which will be attended by disabled people.

- For building accessibility, refer to *Getting There*, especially the sections on Accessible Route, Parking, Entrances, Circulation, and Rest Rooms.
- For details of meeting room design, see Fixed Seating, p. 67, Seating Locations, p. 69, and Lectures, p. 74.
- For communication techniques for making materials and program content available to hearing, visually, or learning impaired people, read *Being There*. See also More About Interpreters, p. 70.

In addition, disabled participants may need accessible hotel rooms, on-site attendant care, special diets, accommodations for guide dogs, or accessible transportation services. Although these topics are not covered in this book, two books on planning meetings (see sidebar) can provide this information.

Two publications on planning and conducting meetings which include disabled people are:

The Planner's Guide to Barrier Free Meetings (1980) by Barrier Free Environments, Inc. and Harold Russell Associates, available for $11.95 from:

HRA
Eight Winchester Place
Suite 804
Winchester, MA 01890

and
Barrier Free Meetings (1980) available for $4.00 from:

The American Association for the Advancement of Science
1515 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20005

The Accessible Conference Kit is available (free) from:

HEATH
1 Dupont Circle
Suite 670
Washington, DC 20036

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National Gallery, Washington, DC

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Chapter 3. Audience Development and Staff Training

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Public Relations

Advertise your accessible programming vigorously. Do mailings, make phone calls to agencies, schools, individuals, and tap your regular advertising resources as well, such as newsletters, members' mailings, and public service announcements on local TV, radio, and in newspapers. Ask agencies that you contact to include your information in newsletters they produce. Be persistent and consistent. Remember that audience building of any variety takes a long time.

On the Other Hand

The understanding and acceptance of disabled people varies widely. For this reason, it is best not to overemphasize the accessibility issue and make disabled people feel singled out or make others feel that they should not attend because the event is "for disabled people." Low key announcements will be noticed by disabled people.

What About Older People?

Although elderly people usually do not think of themselves as "disabled" and avoid being categorized as such, they are a special population whose needs should not be ignored. Don't overlook this large, lively, and frequently talented group of people as participants and volunteers.

The National Center on Arts and the Aging serves as a national clearinghouse for programs, funding information, and resources. Activities include assisting individuals and organizations in establishing arts programs for the elderly, and conducting conferences and seminars. Publications are also available. For more information, write:

National Center on Arts and the Aging
c/o National Council on the Aging
600 Maryland Avenue, SW
West Wing 100
Washington, DC 20024
(202) 479-1200

The following chapter is reprinted, with minor changes, from *Is There Life After 504?* with permission from the Boston Children's Museum.

Audience Development

So... you have ramped, brailled, and elevated. You have formed an advisory council which includes disabled people. You have designed maps and recorded tapes. You have trained your staff. Now, where is the disabled audience?

The disabled members of most communities have, for so long, been unable to participate in arts experiences, that they may assume a facility is inaccessible or that they are somehow unwelcome. A full-scale attempt to reach these audiences must be launched, to let them know that not only is your program accessible, but that you welcome their patronage. Your public relations department is the best place to start spreading the word.

Begin by compiling a mailing list of local agencies, schools, and organizations, using your advisory council as a source of referrals. Obtain a list of all the local newsletters, journals, and media programs that the advisory council uses. If you can afford it, a special mailing to announce physical modifications and to highlight programs and special events for this audience will draw some attention. In any case, you should mention such changes in your regular newsletters and press releases as well.

Displaying the access symbol (see p. 25) on your literature will indicate your concern for the disabled consumer and will serve to educate the general public about the importance of access. It is a good idea to check all of your general literature to be sure that it mentions special parking areas and entrances for handicapped people and that other pertinent information, such as a TTY-TDD number, or special services, is included. Be sure all references to your telephone number indicate your TTY-TDD phone number also.

When contacting disabled people, remember to ask for their feedback and recommendations. You should also include questions about accessibility in any formal or informal evaluation devices your institution already uses.

Don't Give Up!

Often your staff will become very excited about designing and implementing special programs and then be crestfallen when few people appear to take advantage of them. Weak or inconsistent advertising may be to blame, but there are other possible reasons as well. If you have created your program in a vacuum, it may be that the content is simply not appealing to the audience you're trying to reach. Or, if the population of a particular disability group is reasonably

small, you may be offering more programs more often than could possibly be consumed.

Remember also that probably half of the visually impaired members of any community may be elderly. If your organization is doing any outreach to older people, you may want to adapt some of your programs for this particular group.

Take transportation issues into consideration. If there is no public or special transportation to your facility, people may want to come but not have the means to get there.

The deaf community that exists in your area may have a good internal grapevine to which you should get access. Deaf members of your advisory council can help you get access to the deaf community. Remember that information about events will probably take longer to get through that grapevine, so send your information out well in advance.

In all cases, make sure that the tours and events you are offering are of real interest to the people you are trying to serve. Remember that this audience is made up of people who may not view themselves as "arts people," and that people who work with this audience may not view their students and clients as interested in the arts. Start small, advertise big.

Staff Training

The most important element in a program is people. The energy which you can invest in helping your staff to meet the needs of disabled visitors will make the difference between simply fulfilling the legal requirements of 504 and making your arts programs a truly welcoming event for people with disabilities.

Staff training programs are relatively inexpensive but time consuming and not always easy to run. Many times you will be dealing with biases and misconceptions which are deep-rooted and often subtle. If you have a high turnover rate of staff, you may want to offer training on a regular basis. We have found, however, that staff training is worth the investment. Once a staff training program is firmly in place, information about how to be comfortable with disabled visitors will begin to transfer naturally from one person to another.

Designing a Staff Training Program

There are many ways to design a staff training program. Here are some elements you should keep in mind.

You will need to spend some time discussing the needs of disabled visitors with *every* staff member who comes in contact with the public. Begin by discussing basic information about each disability group. (See the following section on "Information About Disabilities.") Once you and your staff have some basic information about disabilities,

Transportation

People with mobility impairments, especially those who use crutches, braces, walkers, or manual wheelchairs can often use conventional automobiles, taxi cabs, or limosines. Those who walk and climb stairs are able to use standard buses. It is relatively easy to obtain transportation services for this group of participants because they are able to move about with little if any assistance.

On the other hand, people who use power driven wheelchairs can only use vehicles with special lift equipment. Power chairs are heavy and, unlike manual chairs, cannot be folded and put into an automobile trunk. In some cities there are services that have vans equipped with wheelchair lifts for the purpose of providing transportation for this segment of the population. This service might be provided by a cab company, by other private companies, or by government agencies. The most efficient way to determine what is available is to ask taxi cab companies, disabled consumer groups, Vocational Rehabilitation offices or Easter Seal Societies. In addition, some public transit systems have buses with lifts. These work well for any type of wheelchair user. If field trips or excursions are planned, perhaps it would be possible to rent a bus with a lift from the bus company.

Transportation needs vary with each participant. The visually impaired person has to rely on other people to provide transportation. If the visually impaired person uses public transportation services such as the bus system, a staff member may need to help locate bus schedules and stops.

From *A Planner's Guide to Barrier Free Meetings*
Barrier Free Environments, Inc.

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Consumers

You will want to think carefully about how to include disabled consumers in your staff training sessions. Our experience at the Children's Museum has led us to believe that inviting people from the disabled community is a very useful way to demystify contact between nondisabled staff and people who have disabilities. Frequently, it is the first opportunity many staff members have to meet, for example, "a real live blind person." Anyone willing to participate in such a session undoubtedly has all the necessary qualifications: a commitment to educating the nondisabled public, familiarity with all the questions that are usually raised, and a sense of humor. However, there are things you should be aware of: often, such consumers are among the most capable and articulate representatives of a disability group, and are therefore not necessarily representative of a cross-section. Although they may be talented at anticipating and dealing with the unspoken questions of your staff, their very presence can sometimes make people unwilling to express some of their more upsetting concerns and anxieties. If you do decide to include disabled people in your sessions, you may want to set aside some separate time for discussion.

you can begin discussion about the ways in which staff can be helpful. (More information on most of these topics can be found in Chapter 2, Access to the Arts.) You will want to talk about:

- the "sighted guide" technique for blind visitors (see p. 92),
- communication techniques for deaf visitors: sign language, speechreading, good old paper and pencil.

For education staff particularly, you will want to talk about:

- being verbally descriptive for blind visitors,
- helping mentally retarded visitors to focus and retain attention,
- limit-setting techniques for children with behavior or attention problems,
- things to remember when working with sign language interpreters: make sure the visitors can see both of you; make sure you speak at a moderate pace and that the interpreters can hear you; when answering questions from the visitors, speak directly to the questioner, not the interpreter.

For security staff particularly, you will want to talk about:

- firm but gentle handling of any visitor who seems to be experiencing an obvious behavioral or emotional problem,
- special equipment disabled people may bring with them.

You should also spend some time discussing the common but inaccurate stereotypes that surround each disability, and some of the inappropriate behaviors that people often display, such as talking to an ambulatory person who is with someone in a wheelchair rather than speaking directly to the disabled person. Do this gently. You will not change attitudes by preaching.

Using a variety of disabled consumers in your training may help immensely. They can recount personal experiences they have had as consumers and help your staff to see things from the visitor's point of view. They can answer questions about disabilities and what it is like to have one. They can provide staff with what might be their first comfortable exchange with a disabled person. They can demonstrate helping techniques such as sighted guide travel.

Questions

A difficult, but necessary, step is to help staff to articulate whatever fears they may have about interacting with people who have disabilities. How well this can be done will depend on how much time you have, and your skills as a group leader. We are not suggesting the creation of a group therapy session. Rather, people will need a nonthreatening forum in which to state their anxieties, which they may find embarrassing and difficult to share, especially in the face of your confidence and your advisors' expertise. In long-term training sessions, this kind of information should come to the surface naturally as people develop trust in you, the other people in the group, and in their own abilities. For briefer encounters, we have tried the following method with some success.

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Prior to some sessions, we asked participants to fill out anonymous questionnaires. This told us what kind of information people thought they had about disabilities, what kinds of things they wanted to know, and how comfortable they felt with disabled people. This is certainly not sure-fire, but it gave us an idea what information we needed to stress and in what areas people were most anxious. At other sessions we gave a brief introduction, and then immediately asked people to write down (anonymously) their biggest fear or area of concern about working with disabled visitors. We then showed a videotape, introduced the speaker, or had another leader take over the session, while the original leader went through the notes and then addressed areas of concern.

Generally, we found that the staff were most concerned about the following things:

- When should I offer help? How should I help? How can I avoid being seen as condescending or patronizing?
- Will disabled visitors be embarassed if I give them some special attention?
- What can I do when the nondisabled public seems uncomfortable in the presence of disabled visitors?
- What can I do about my own discomfort? Mentally retarded people frighten me. I become upset when I see people who have any kind of physical abnormality.
- What can I do in an emergency? How do I get physically handicapped people out of the building in case of fire? What do I do if someone has a seizure, or if someone gets 'out of control'?

And Answers

How to anticipate and answer such questions will depend to a certain extent on how much time you have, your own confidence in dealing with these issues, and the style of staff/patron relationship your activities promote. At the Boston Children's Museum, we address those questions in the following ways:

- Don't be shy about offering help. Do so whenever people look as if they might need some. If they don't, they will tell you. And don't be personally offended if this happens; you haven't failed. It's your help that's been rejected, not you.
- Ask how you should help. The people with disabilities know what they need. Never push a wheelchair without being asked, and never lead a blind person without being asked. You can avoid being seen as patronizing and condescending by not being patronizing and condescending. This sounds like a flip remark, but we all know when we are doing this and how to stop it if we pause to think for a moment.
- If a disabled person is embarrassed by your attention he or she will probably let you know. Pay attention to the social cues you are getting just as you would in any other interaction.

Close Harmony

Close Harmony is a 1981 Academy Award-winning documentary by Nigel Noble. In this 30 minute film, Arlene Symons merges a chorus of school children and one of older adults into a single intergenerational group. With music as the bond, both groups change and grow as they work and perform together. The film can be rented for $40 or purchased for $450 in 16 mm form or $350 in video form. For more information, write:

Learning Corporation of America
1350 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10009

Labels for Everyone

At the Children's Museum, we believe that our public relations campaign about museum accessibility is not just for the disabled audience, but for the nondisabled audience as well. This educational effort began a number of years ago with the original version of "What If You Couldn't...? An Exhibit About Special Needs," which grew into a curriculum unit and book. In the context of the current project, we have tried an experiment which we think is working very well. In every area of the museum where an adaptation exists that aids accessibility, we have put up a sign that explains its purpose. For instance, the elevator panel's special markings and height are explained in a sign next to the panel, and the accessible bathrooms have signs that explain their unique design.

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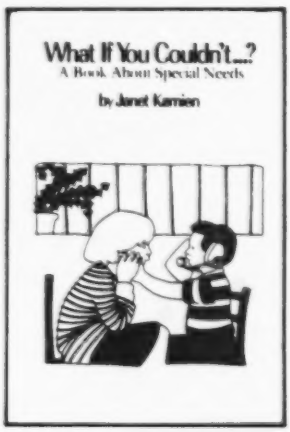
Training Materials

Some materials have been developed by Children's Museum staff as training aids. The materials and activities presented in the curriculum kit, *What If You Couldn't...?*, although designed for elementary school classrooms, have been used successfully by a number of museums and teacher training programs. It is available from:

Burt Harrison, Inc.
P.O. Box 732
Weston, MA 02193



A book, entitled *What If You Couldn't*, by Janet Kamien, is available from Charles Scribner's Sons, 597 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10017. It is also being used in training programs for adults.

A video tape, entitled *Us and Them*, which examines three relationships between disabled and nondisabled people, is both serious and provocative.

The film can be rented for $75, or bought for $250. For more information, write:

Fred Simon Productions
75 Court Street
Newtonville, MA 02160

- If a nondisabled person seems uncomfortable in the presence of a disabled person, you can do one of two things: ignore it, or gently challenge the discomfort by saying something like the following: "It looks like that little boy is having a good time with the computer." Or, "Are you interested in cane travel? We have an exhibit upstairs about different kinds of disabilities that's really interesting."
- Your own discomfort will pass once you have spent some time with disabled people. There is nothing to be afraid or ashamed of; just being aware of this problem is the first step in overcoming it.

Once you have identified areas of concern, gathered some information about various disabilities, documented helping strategies, and investigated your policy as it may apply, it's useful to record this information in written form.

It will be good to send people away with this kind of reference material in hand, and it will be useful for orienting new staff who come on board between training sessions. If administrators or others view themselves as inappropriate recipients of training because they are not part of a direct service staff, or because they are "too busy," written materials may be a way to get them some information and keep them abreast of your efforts.

Other Training Strategies

Thus far, we have talked primarily about a discussion format, but there are other training strategies you can also try. There are some films and videotapes that are good conversation starters.

You might also try some simulation exercises, such as exploring your programs from a wheelchair, or while blindfolded or with your ears stopped up. Some people feel this is a pretty shopworn idea and some even find it offensive, stating quite rightly that there is no way to really simulate a handicap to a nonhandicapped person. However, we feel that if it is viewed as an exercise, it can open up some new awareness on the part of your staff that will be useful in your training efforts.

The most effective training programs will have a built-in support system and follow-up plan. This is an ongoing process. Try not to set up a one-shot training session that leaves your staff feeling as though there was something they somehow didn't learn, and that they are failing. The best way to do this is to be aware when disabled people attend your programs and to observe your staff interacting. Later, tactful criticism, praise for good work, and just listening to staff impressions will do more good than all the questionnaires, lectures, films, and exercises in the world.

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Information About Disabilities

It's not as if disability is something you understand from birth. You have to learn.

Victoria Lewis
The Mark Taper Forum
Los Angeles, California

There is a dramatic range of ability and disability in each individual. One person described as mentally retarded may live independently, be married, have children, and hold down a job. Another may require constant custodial care. One person described as blind may be able to read large print, while another may have little or no sensitivity to light. A deaf person may or may not have good reading and writing skills.

It is most important not to lump people together in categories and to expect them to behave according to preconceived ideas. "Good" stereotypes are as destructive as "bad" ones because they pigeon-hole people. As more is learned about specific disabilities, it is easier to challenge stereotypes and negative feelings. For many people, learning concrete information is a first step toward gaining a broader understanding about disabilities. We have therefore included this section which gives a brief description of six different disability areas and some of the implications for each group.

Physical or Orthopedic Handicaps

People may experience mobility or other motor problems for a number of different reasons. Problems originating at birth may include birth defects, cerebral palsy, and muscular dystrophy. Cerebral palsy is a blanket term that indicates that there has been damage to the central nervous system resulting in motor and possibly sensory problems. Since such damage is irreparable, conditions usually get neither better nor worse. The manifestations of this damage can be mild or severe. Muscular dystrophy is a group of many progressive disorders whose major characteristic is the gradual wasting away of muscles.

Physical disabilities usually acquired later in life include mild or severe motor problems resulting from diseases such as polio, loss of limbs from accident or disease-related amputation, and spinal cord injury resulting in varying degrees of paralysis. Generally speaking, people who have mobility or other motor problems are usually credited with much less physical ability than they actually have, and are considered much more physically fragile than they actually are.

If you have taken care of accessibility issues facing people who use wheelchairs, and you have provided rest areas and elevator service for people who have difficulty with stairs, the problem that remains for the physically disabled is your attitude about what they can and cannot do. The most important message for your staff to hear in the case of this and every other disability is that the person who has the disability is an expert! If you have any questions about what visitors can or cannot physically do, or whether they need help, the

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Guide Dogs

When people are accompanied by guide dogs, you should remember the following:

- Guide dogs are working dogs and shouldn't be petted, spoken to, or led without permission of their owners. Never lead or command somebody else's guide dog.
- Seating spaces for people with a guide dog should provide adjacent space for the dog. (See Seating Locations, p. 69.)
- Be prepared to tell a person with a guide dog where the dog can be taken outside and how to get there (no escalators).

only people equipped to answer that question are the people with the disability. If they look like they need help, ask them! If they say no, don't be personally offended. If they want some help, and you don't know how to give it, ask them! They will tell you if they want their wheelchair pushed, or if they need help reaching the item they want to buy in the shop.

Visual Impairments

Visual impairments encompass a wide range of ability and disability. Someone who is described as legally blind may be able to read large print and do without mobility aids in many or all situations. He or she may be able to perceive not only light and dark but colors as well. On the other hand, a person described as legally blind may have none of these abilities.

Many people tend to lump several visual impairments into one problem and one solution because this is easiest, but unfortunately it does not work. In addition to the range of skills dependent on how much and what kind of vision was lost, there is also a range of skills dependent on when vision was lost. People who lost their sight at birth probably have skills in reading braille and tactile orientation materials which people who lost their vision later in life may not have. However, people who lost their sight later in life probably have a storehouse of visual memories of color and scale, and concepts of visual constructs like reflection and symmetry that someone blind from birth doesn't have. It is impossible to generalize.

But it is possible to generalize the stereotypical behaviors that many sighted people display when first meeting a blind person.

- People tend to shout, as though the blind person were deaf as well.
- People tend to speak to a blind person through a third party, in the way they often speak to children: "Does he want another glass of milk?" Obviously, someone who is blind is perfectly capable of dialogue without an interpreter.
- People tend to avoid using words such as "look," "see," "blind alley," etc. when speaking with a blind person. This takes unnecessary effort and makes the process of conversing very awkward.
- People hesitate to aid a blind person, or, if they try, become offended if their help is refused. Or they don't ask how they might be helpful, they just grab an arm or a cane and go to it! It is advisable to first ask what the blind person needs or where he or she wants to go. Generally, the best way to serve as a *sighted guide* is to offer you arm and walk about a half step in front of the person you are guiding. Although in this way the guided person will be able to feel you go up a curb or stair first, you should also mention obstacles and elevations as you approach them.
- People forget to be descriptive enough in their expectations, or find themselves feeling too awkward to give a description in the first

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place. They also neglect to announce their identities and forget to mention that they have come into a room or that they are leaving. All of these behaviors tend to make social interactions awkward and sometimes serve to further isolate people who are blind.

Hearing Impairments

Hearing impairments can be even more confusing in the range of ability and disability that exists. Most people have heard of speechreading and sign language, and know that being deaf does not necessarily mean that one is "mute." However, many people seem to go "blank" when first meeting an individual whose communication skills have been affected by deafness.

The most devastating stereotype is the suspicion on the part of hearing people that deaf people cannot understand something because they are *incapable* of understanding, rather than realizing that it is the communication tools that are at fault. Closing the communication gap between a deaf and a hearing person can be accomplished by some effort and a little common sense.

Some deaf and hard-of-hearing people are adept at speechreading. The speaker can greatly improve matters by doing a few simple things:

- Look at the person as you speak. Don't put your hands in front of your mouth or speak with food or a cigarette in your mouth.
- Converse directly with a deaf person even when an interpreter is present. Look at the deaf person while you speak and while he or she replies.
- Don't overenunciate. A natural movement of the lips and tongue is preferable.
- Speak in short, simply constructed sentences. If a phrase or word is not understood, try repeating the idea using different words.
- Don't shout. If the person is profoundly deaf, it won't help a bit anyway. For a person who is wearing a hearing aid, a slightly louder voice may help, but shouting can actually hurt the person's ears and make it more difficult to understand what is being said.
- Don't be afraid to use gestures to help get your point across. Learning even a few signs would help.

Although a deaf person may be quite good at understanding you, you may have trouble understanding them. One of the results of profound deafness from an early age is that the deaf person may never have heard his or her own voice and therefore may have a very difficult time learning to speak well. Some people who have profound deafness can be understood quite easily, others not. In this event, if speech and gesture have failed, paper and pencil communication should also be tried. (See also Communicating with Hearing Impaired People, p. 48.)

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Mental Retardation vs. Learning Disabilities

Mentally retarded individuals have a reduced or delayed intellectual development. Their learning problems may include a short attention span, a slower learning rate, lack of memory skills, and an inability to generalize and conceptualize.

Mentally retarded people are also limited in their ability to handle social activities. When a person has poor comprehension and cannot remember or utilize information, the problem is in the *content* of the message. The solution is to adjust and simplify the material so that it does not exceed the person's learning level.

Learning disabled people generally have average or above average intelligence and can learn at the same rate as their age peers. The learning disability describes a range of physiological conditions which cause problems as individuals process information. Learning disabled people have specific difficulty with spoken or written language skills. One person may be constitutionally unable to gain information that is given verbally while another may fully understand spoken instructions but have difficulty grasping the meaning of the printed word. There is variation in the ways communications barriers intrude. Several of the more common categories are: *Dyslexia* which means problems with written information; *dyscalculia* which means there's a problem understanding numbers; and *dysgraphia* which means a problem with writing. The barrier for each of these classifications is obviously different. What is a barrier to individuals with one condition can be the open door to understanding for another. Flexibility and creativity in communication are the keys to elimination of problems.

Mental Retardation

The range of ability and disability in people described as mentally retarded is probably more dramatic than in any other disability area. The level of apprehension and misconception by the general public is also dramatic. For most retarded people, it is not the ability to learn that has been curtailed, but the speed and ease with which things are learned.

Many retarded visitors to cultural programs are readers and talkers, obviously enjoying their experience, obviously grasping the concrete information and some of the more abstract information as well. Other retarded visitors have few communication skills. We may understand what they are enjoying from a few laughs or smiles and excited exclamations, but we really have little idea of what they are "getting" from the experience, except that they are having a good time. Some of our retarded and multiply-handicapped visitors are able to offer us no feedback at all. They may even appear upset or unhappy. However, since we have no way to know what any visitor is going to gain from an arts program, we must take all visitors' experiences seriously.

Mildly to moderately retarded children and adults will not usually behave very differently from their peers except for a more or less obvious delay in cognitive development. They may be interested in things that are age-appropriate for younger people, and some social skills may be below age level as well. Although it is important to provide experiences which will be appealing, it is equally important not to assume or behave as though a retarded person's personality or emotional needs are really those of a much younger person, because this simply may not be true. The learning style of a retarded person can be generalized as more concrete, more repetitive, and possibly less focused than a nonretarded peer. But emotional life, sense of humor, and sensitivity to others may be much more sophisticated than cognitive development would lead one to believe.

For severely and profoundly retarded people, the question most asked is, what can they possibly gain from an arts experience? Our answer is, frankly, that we don't know. Since we do know that stimulation and new experiences are the first steps to new learning, this is not a question we can concern ourselves with.

The important ideas are:

- Don't underestimate the potential of any patron,
- Focus attention by presenting appealing ideas and activities. If something isn't working, don't be afraid to change teaching strategies and move to the next thing.
- Be clear and concrete about your expectations and behavior, both in terms of rules of the institution and directions for activities. Be repetitive if necessary. Notice and support appropriate behavior.

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- Allow participants to work with ideas at whatever cognitive level seems appropriate.
- Do not patronize your audience.

Learning Disabilities

Learning disabilities is a blanket term used to describe almost any kind of learning problem that cannot be described as retardation or a behavior problem. Generally, such disabilities arise from visual or auditory perception problems. This means that a person's hearing and vision are functioning properly, but that the message is not sorted properly once it is received.

Learning disabilities do not usually present much of a problem, but there are several things to be aware of:

- Reading skills may be poor. Make sure that a good experience is not totally dependent on reading.
- Attention spans may be short, especially in settings that are visually confusing and noisy.
- Some severely handicapped learning disabled people may be "hyperactive". Make your expectations of behavior and pace clear and concrete.

Emotional Problems

Many of the issues surrounding arts experiences by children and adults with emotional problems are similar to concerns about mentally retarded visitors: is the experience appropriate? what is the child or adult learning? what behavior can be expected? But an additional concern is often voiced by staff: what can I do if an incident happens? how should I respond to bizarre out-of-control behavior?

During the past ten years at the Children's Museum, we have been visited by hundreds of adults and children with emotional problems, most often in groups but occasionally alone or with families. In that time, we have sometimes enlisted the support of a group leader when a visitor was behaving inappropriately and we have had to train our staff to deal firmly with difficult situations. Fortunately there have been no serious incidents, no injury to staff or visitors, no damage to the museum facility.

Generally speaking, incidents when participants behave in a strange or inappropriate way will be very rare. Your staff may need some guidance, however, in dealing with the few situations which might arise. Most importantly, they should know how to look for assistance, either from another staff member or from counselors and teachers who usually accompany most groups in large numbers. Group leaders are usually very skillful at dealing with difficult behavior and are especially concerned that people in their group have a successul visit. It is also important that rules of behavior be stated very clearly before any visit begins, and that staff be prepared to deal gently but firmly with any behavior that is inappropriate to your program.

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Seizures

Although there are usually no more medical problems for disabled people than there are for able-bodied people, your staff should probably receive some instruction in what to do if a visitor should have a seizure. If your organization does not already have guidelines for assisting someone who has had a seizure, the following suggestions may be helpful:

- If a person begins to fall in your presence, try to block the fall, so injury does not occur.
- Once the person is on the floor and having the seizure, try to get furniture, people, etc. out of the way. If there is something handy, like a shirt or sweater, place it under the head.
- Do not attempt to hold the person's body or limbs down during the seizure. Do not attempt to place anything in the person's mouth.
- Saliva may collect in the mouth. If possible, try to turn the head gently to the side to allow this to drain onto the floor.
- When the seizure is over, the person may want to find a quiet place to rest, a bathroom, or may simply want to leave. Help the person to do what he or she wants and try to secure as much privacy as possible.

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Conclusion

A Word to the Wise

Cultural organizations throughout the country are complying with the Endowment 504 Regulations in a most economical, efficient, and expedient manner. Arts groups' careful planning and close communication with disabled constituents have proven to be an extremely successul approach to removing barriers. Many arts organizations report that facilities and programs are better for everyone when the needs of disabled people are considered. For example, large print labeling in museums and galleries is more easily read by all, and many people prefer elevators to steps.

Access to the arts is creating new and larger audiences. Audience development efforts have grown out of the newly created awareness to include the following:

- The *Exploratorium Museum* in San Francisco increased its deaf visitors through outreach programs developed by a deaf staff member.
- The *Milwaukee Symphony* in Wisconsin trained and integrated blind docents into its programs.
- The *New York City Opera* sign interprets or "Surtitles" performances that are enjoyed by many hearing impaired people.
- The *J. Paul Getty Museum* in Los Angeles, opened its doors and galleries to mobility impaired people through a series of recent structural modifications.
- *New York's Theatre Development Fund* sold 5,703 tickets to disabled people in 1984 ($98,366 paid to theaters) through its Theater Access Program that provides technical assistance to theaters as well as outreach to disabled people.
- The *Alley Theater* in Houston, Texas has significantly increased its audience through pre-performance workshops for visually impaired people, as well as sign and shadow-interpreted performances, an infrared system, and TDD for hearing impaired individuals.

These are only a few of the arts groups that have demonstrated vision and creativity in opening spaces and programs to people whose needs were not previously considered.

504 is here to stay. Arts organizations that are not actively concerned with accessible programming not only risk the loss of federal funds, but are missing the opportunity to grow and learn about many talented, able Americans. Most important, the assurance of equal opportunity for everyone to appreciate the arts is a fundamental starting point for all our efforts.

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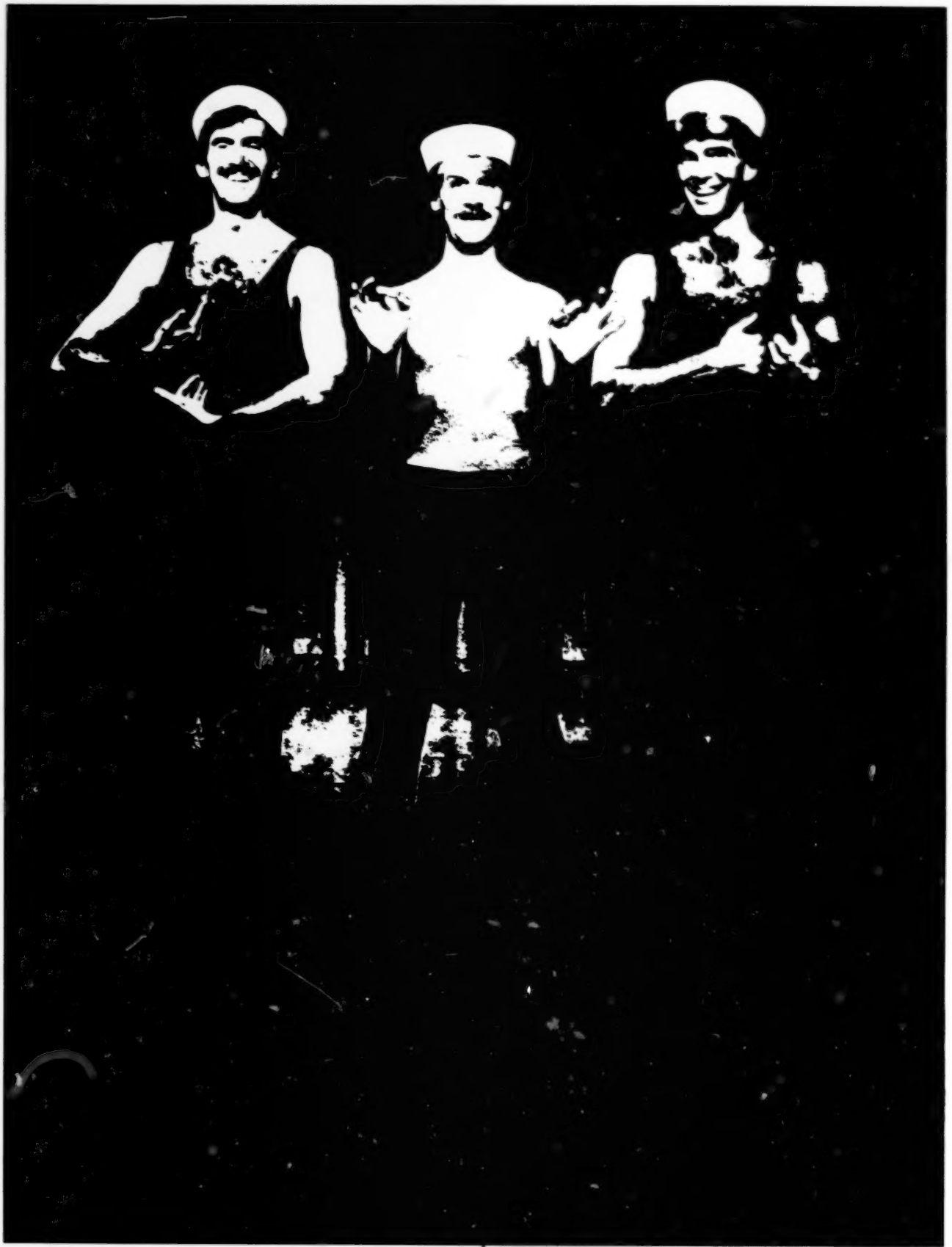

Stage Hands, Atlanta, GA

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